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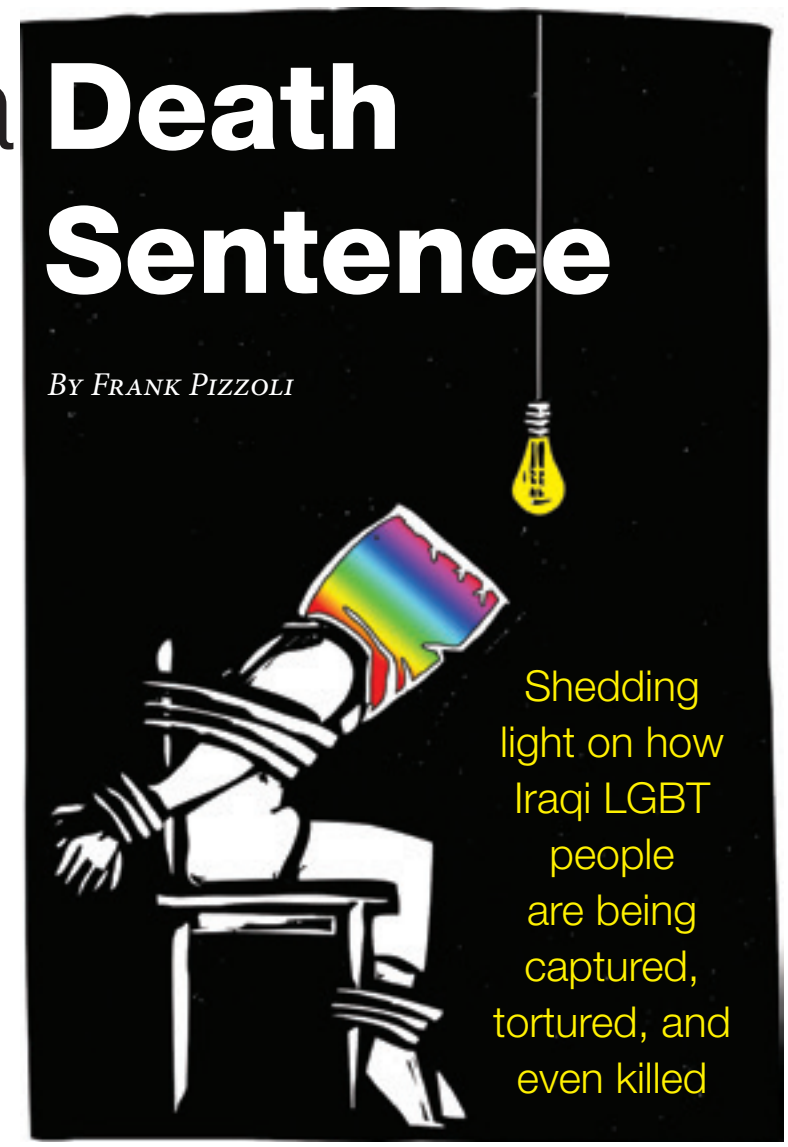
When Coming Out Is a Death Sentence



"Iraqi families are disowning their LGBT members," Hossein Alizadeh tells *Central Voice*.

The 39-year-old New York City resident is Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator at International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). A US citizen originally from Iran, he studied international conflict resolution at Notre Dame.

"Right now in Iraq LGBT people are being captured, tortured, and even killed," Alizadeh explains. Violence against gay people is accomplished through the use of terror on the neighborhood level. For example, a leaflet distributed by the Asaib Ahl Al-haq militia shows a list of "sodomites". The leaflet *(see photo on page 19)* is from June 2014 when the photo was taken in Sadr-city, Baghdad.

GAY PEOPLE ARE PUSHED OUT OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND BECOME PREY FOR RELIGIOUS MILITIAS

Alizadeh explained to *Central Voice* what is happening.

"When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 they brought with them technology and the Internet which was left behind upon their departure," he says. Internet cafés developed as did favorite meeting places for the LGBT community. For a period of time, "gay people had rising visibility, they had places to hang out and were able to meet each other," Alizadeh said.

And then came a backlash primarily from Iraqis religious militias.

"The Iraqi government does not formally support violence against gay people but they also will not ask the religious militias to stop their violence against gay people," Alizadeh says. The appearance of the Islamic State has further complicated the situation. Religious militias, which are gaining popularity and have local branches in various parts of the country, are now joining with the Iraqi government armed forces in order to push back the threat of the IS. "Now that the independent religious militias and the Iraqi armed forces are joined in an effort to defeat IS, we are asking the Iragi Minister of Human Rights investigate this violence," he says.

Hossein is also hoping the US will use its influence to bring attention to the problem of violence against LGBT Iragis. USAID provides Iraq with about $1 billion annually in humanitarian and governmental aid. "We'd like to see some of these funds devoted to helping Iraqi gay people resettle in countries where LGBT rights are respected," Alizdaeh says.

The plight of Iraqi gay people is made worse by the rejection of their families.

"Families are not protecting their own. Any form of homosexuality is seen as disgrace against the image of the family. Gay people are pushed out of the household and become prey for religious militias," Alizadeh says.

"We can document violence against gay people as far back as 2004. By 2008 the problem had become really serious," Alizadeh said. By 2012 the tremendous

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LGBT Students Feel Unsafe

Rep. Ron Marsico Makes Protection from Hazing a Priority

By Central Voice

Local State Rep. Ron Marsico (R-Lower Paxton) is making it a priority to protect students from harmful hazing rituals. He is developing a bill that would make it a crime for hazing to occur at Pennsylvania schools and that requires schools to write and enforce policies to prevent hazing.

"Hazing is another form of bullying, which must be stopped," Marsico said in a news release.

"Traditional bullying involves singling out one individual at any time and bullying them as a means to exclude them. Hazing involves bullying someone to make them earn their way into a group or onto a team."

Hazing is often defined as the practice of rituals or other activities

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Lancaster County Coroner's Private Medical Practice Denies HIV Treatment Suits Claims

Filed on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, 2014, a private health-care practice directed by the Lancaster County coroner was sued in federal court by the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania on behalf of a man who was denied treatment, the suit claims, because he is HIV-positive.

The denial, communicated in a letter to the man from Stephen G. Diamantoni, M.D., & Associates Family Practice, applies to his wife and his daughter as well. Refusing to treat a person with a disability — in this case, HIV — is illegal under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The suit is filed on behalf of "Husband, Wife and Daughter Jones," who are using pseudonyms because federal rules require that a minor child's identity be protected in a lawsuit.

Stephen G. Diamantoni, who has been the Lancaster County coroner since 2008, did not personally treat Jones.

In June 2013, Jones and his family moved to Lancaster County from South Carolina, having already contacted the Diamantoni practice to secure health care for himself and his family. The practice

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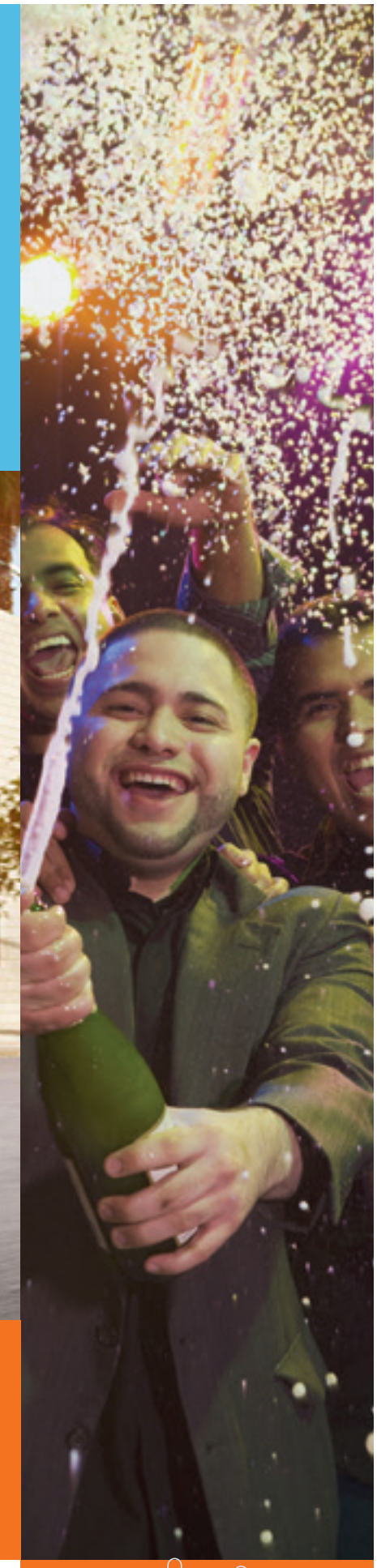
Fleck's Fallout pg 5

LIFE'S TOO SHORT TO DRIVE A BORING CAR



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Political Update

• Apple CEO Tim Cook Comes Out

Apple CEO Tim Cook came out in an essay for Bloomberg Businessweek. Although Cook has never denied being gay, he had not previously discussed his sexuality. "So let me be clear: I'm proud to be gay, and I consider being gay among the greatest gifts God has given me." He described how his sexuality has given him an acute social perspective. "Being gay has given me a deeper understanding of what it means to be in the minority and provided a window into the challenges that people in other minority groups deal with every day. It's made me more empathetic, which has led to a richer life. It's been tough and uncomfortable at times, but it has given me the confidence to be myself, to follow my own path, and to rise above adversity and bigotry. It's also given me the skin of a rhinoceros, which comes in handy when you're the CEO of Apple." He also said, "If hearing that the CEO of Apple is gay can help someone struggling to come to terms with who he or she is, or bring comfort to anyone who feels alone, or inspire people to insist on their equality, then it's worth the trade-off with my own privacy."

• State Department Pushes Gay Rights

The US State Department hosted a conference in mid-November that focused on increasing funds for LGBT advocacy efforts around the world. U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah, Ambassador Kees van Baar of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Javier Vasquez of the Pan American Health Organization, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice Executive Director J. Bob Alotta, Council for Global Equality Chair Mark Bromley and Arcus Foundation Executive Director Kevin Jennings attended the discussions. Thomas Shannon, counselor to Secretary of State John Kerry, noted that for 2014 the US has contributed more than $5 million to advance LGBT rights in more than 50 countries through its Global Equality Fund.

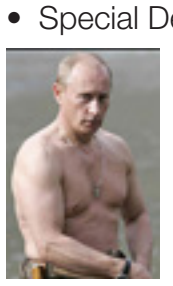
• Latvian Foreign Minister Comes Out

Latvian Foreign Minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, publicly "came out" on Twitter. He tweeted: "I proudly announce I'am gay... Good luck all of you..." Right before publically coming out, he wrote: "Our country has created a legal framework for all types of partnerships, [I] will fight for it, I know that will immediately [create] hysteria, but #Proudtobegay.

• Olympic Committee: Add Sexual Orientation

International Olympic Committee President, Thomas Bach, has recommended that Principle 6 of the Olympic charter, explicitly name sexual orientation as one of the protected classes in the non-discrimination policy. This request went before the full IOC meeting December 8 in Monaco. "No athlete or fan should face fear of discrimination because of who they love," said GLAAD President & CEO Sarah Kate Ellis. "The International Olympic Committee must seize this opportunity to protect Olympic attendees and affirm its commitment to equality across the globe."

• Special Delivery: Putin's Sperm



"I've heard of disseminating ideas, but this is ridiculous," wrote the New York *Observer* writer Kevin B. Sanders. He was referring to a proposal that "Each female citizen of Russia will be able to receive by mail the genetic material of the President". The Russian-language newspaper, *Trust*, reported that an actual lawmaker has introduced to the State Duma a bill that proposes extending the greatness of Russian by having children using the sperm of Vladimir Putin. "The essence of my proposition is simple", says the Chairwoman Of Parliamentary Commission on Women's affairs, Children and Family, Yelena Borisovna Mizoulina. "Each female citizen of Russia will be able to receive by mail the genetic material of the President, get pregnant from him and have a baby. These mothers will be receiving special allowances from the government. And after the birth of the child, he will have to be given to be raised into the special institutions that resemble Souvorov Schools with the aim that he will be loyal to the Motherland and personally to the President of RF." A Souvorov school resembled the "military boarding school" concept familiar to Americans and RF means Russian Federation.

• Slovakia Could Ban Marriage

The Slovak Constitutional Court (ÚS) has allowed the government to play with fire, the daily Pravda wrote in reaction to the judges' ruling that most questions to be asked in the referendum on the "protection of the traditional family" were constitutional. However, Christian activists are outraged that the Slovak high court rejected a proposed question that might bring about a ban on same-sex registered partnership. "Democracy stands on and falls with the respect of majority for minorities that do not threaten democracy," Pravda writes. "There is probably the only right answer to a referendum that wants to make a decision on a minority from the viewpoint of the majority: Ignore it," it adds. Pravda points out a statement by former ÚS Deputy Chairman Eduard Bárány that all the referendum questions relate to fundamental rights and freedoms about which a plebiscite should not be held.

• Seoul, South Korea: Activists Stage Sit-in

At press time, activists in Seoul South Korea were in the second night of a sit-in outside the office of the Mayor of Seoul Metropolitan Government, Mr. Park Won-Soon, urging him to proclaim a sought-after Soeul Human Rights Charter. Protestors are asking that the city government protect LGBT people from discrimination and violence. Park pledged to honor the charter when he ran for office in 2001. The document represents the work of the Citizen Committee, composed of 164 volunteer citizens selected by lottoery. They worked with 30 human rights experts to create the document.

• Singapore's Ban on Sex Stands

Three gay men lost their fight to overturn Singapore's ban on sex between males, as judges at the nation's highest court ruled that the 76-year-old law is constitutional. The "intensely controversial" challenge brought by the men is best debated before the city's parliament, Court of Appeal Justices Andrew Phang, Belinda Ang and Woo Bih Li said in their 107-page decision. "Whilst we understand the deeply held personal feelings of the appellants, there's nothing that this court can do to assist them," the judges wrote in their ruling. "Their remedy lies, if at all, in the legislative sphere." The law, known as Section 377A, was retained in 2007 after a two-day debate in parliament where related provisions that made heterosexual oral and anal sex a crime were repealed. Church groups and gay-rights activists have clashed over the ban, which the government says it hasn't actively enforced since the mid-1990s. "Only one voice -- and one voice alone -- is relevant," the judges said. "It is the voice of the law, which represents the voice of objectivity."

• Ukraine Cinema Fire during LGBT Film

Oct. 29, Kyiv's (Ukraine) oldest cinema Zhovten, located in the historic Podil district, caught fire. Massive flames and black smoke engulfed the roof of the building while people inside watched a movie screening as part of the Molodist Festival. Movie goers were watching Mario Fanfani's *Summers Nights*, a film about lesbian-gay-transgender-bisexual communities. Zhovten theatre specializes in off-beat movies and festivals. "We heard a hissing sound. First we didn't understand anything. Then, everyone turned around. People began to leave the hall," Yulia, a young witness, told The Kyiv Times. She did not provide her last name fearing she would be questioned by the police as a witness. Kyiv city Mayor Vitali Klitschko said he was planning to have a meeting with heads of city departments to make sure the cult cinema is speedily returned to the community. "I want to say one thing: we are not going to allow to take away the Zhovten cinema that has become the symbol of intellectual cinema among the capital's viewers," Klitschko said in a statement on the city government web site.

• Advance for Trans Rights in Malaysia

In a landmark ruling, Malaysia's Putrajaya Court of Appeal has ruled that it is unconstitutional for the state of Negeri Sembilan to criminalize transgender individuals for "cross dressing." Citing articles of the Constitution of Malaysia that protect fundamental liberties, including equality, freedom from discrimination and freedom of expression, Judge Mohd Hishamudin Yunus of the federal Putrajaya Court of Appeal ruled that Article 66, which prohibited cross dressing, of the the Negeri Sembilan Syariah Criminal Enactment (1992) is "invalid as being unconstitutional. It is inconsistent with Articles 5(1), 8(1) and (2), 9(2) and 10(1) of the federal constitution..." "Today's ruling sets a critical precedent for recognizing and affirming the human rights—and lives—of trans women in Malaysia," said Grace Poore, regional program coordinator for Asia at IGLHRC. "Long the subject of state-sanctioned violence and persecution, trans Malaysians now have a ruling that recognizes the federal constitution supersedes local laws, particularly when these laws blatantly contravene the protections enshrined in the constitution." In the ruling, Judge Yunus writes Section 66 "deprives the appellants of their right to live with dignity," and "prohibits" transgender people from "moving in public places to reach their respective places of work." P*hoto courtesy of Justice for Sisters*

• Bangalore: Detention of 167 Transgender

On Nov. 25-26, 2014, about 167 members of the transgender community were taken away by the police and kept at the Beggars' Colony, reports the Bangalore Mirror. The detentions appear to be arbitrary. More detentions were expected in coming days. Detainees were not on the streets begging or violating any acts prohibited under the Karnataka Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1975. Most of them were going about their daily chores when they were arbitrarily picked up by police officers and taken away. Police entered the homes of the hijras (transgender) and dragged them out. Hijras who went to the police station because they were called by others arrested were also detained. *Photo by India Resists*

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FABULOUS!

"The Central Voice marriage issue was fabulous!"
- Julie Lobur, partner of Marla Cattermole, both FAB 2014 award winners and plaintiffs in Pennsylvania's successful same-sex marriage case.

SHARE

"Thanks as always for the space to share who we are and what we do."
- Louie Marven, Executive Director, LGBT Center of Central PA

LGBT Civil Rights Worldwide:

Violence Fueled by Religion

Frank Pizzoli

While the list of American states allowing same-sex marriage grows, our LGBT brothers and sisters around world face a violent backlash. Much of the backlash is fueled by religious organizations that sense failure in the US. Consequently, they have turned their ignorance toward nations where separations between religion and the state are historically blurred or non-existent.

While in the US, Apple CEO Tim Cook comes out, the US State Department last November hosted a conference focusing on increasing funds for LGBT advocacy efforts around the world. For 2014 the US has contributed more than $5 million to advance LGBT rights in more than 50 countries through its Global Equality Fund.

Why are funds needed?

In our story "When Coming Out Is a Death Sentence" (page one), Hossein Alizadeh tells *Central Voice* "Iraqi families are disowning their LGBT members." The 39-year-old New York City resident is Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator at International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

In many nations homosexuality is defined as a crime of "gross indecency" and "unnatural acts".

In Malawi in Late November a male couple, Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, was sentenced to 14 years' hard labor intended, the judge said, to scare others.

Some 80 countries criminalize consensual homosexual sex. Over half rely on "sodomy" laws left over from British colonialism. Lately many are trying to make their laws even more repressive. Last year, Burundi's president, Pierre Nkurunziza, signed a law criminalizing consensual gay sex, despite his Senate's overwhelming rejection of the bill.

A draconian bill proposed in Uganda would dole out jail sentences for failing to report gay people to the police and could impose the death penalty for gay sex if one of the participants is HIV-positive. In March Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, who once described gay people as worse than dogs or pigs, ruled out constitutional changes outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation.

A radical American pastor named Scott Lively, a 56-year-old Massachusetts native, specializes in stirring up anti-gay feeling around the globe. In Uganda, which he first visited in 2002, he has cultivated ties to influential politicians, like Burundi's president, Pierre Nkurunziza, and religious leaders at the forefront of the nation's anti-gay crusade. Just before the first draft of Uganda's anti-gay bill began circulating in April 2009, Lively traveled to Kampala to give lengthy presentations to the Ugandan parliament and cabinet. He argued that Western agitators were trying to unravel Uganda's social fabric by spreading "the disease" of homosexuality to children. "They're looking for other people to be able to prey upon," Lively said, according to video footage. "When they see a child that's from a broken home it's like they have a flashing neon sign over their head." How sick is his point of view? Me thinks he doth protest too much.

Lively is not the only US evangelical who has fanned the flames of anti-gay sentiment in Uganda. An influential Ugandan Assemblies of God pastor, Stephen Langa, is active with anti-gay measures overseas. As US-based Christian groups lose ground at home, where public opinion and law rapidly shift in favor of gay equality, religious conservatives have increasingly turned their attention to Africa. And Uganda, with its large Christian population, as well as many pockets of population earlier evangelized by US Christian churches, has been particularly fertile ground for their crusade.

A quick read through our Political Update section (page 3) reveals a rollercoaster of ups and downs on gay rights worldwide.

In fact, with the level of violence against LGBT people taking place around the world, it's foolish to cast the discussion in Western terms like "basic civil rights" when you fear for your life. When after reaching out on a social networking web site 10 or 15 violent bullies show up in your Moscow apartment to harass and beat on you, it's irrelevant if you can put your lover on the lease.

The contrast in the world regarding LGBT rights is startling.

In Latvia the Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs publicly comes out.

A member of the Russian Duma (Assembly) introduces a bill that proposes extending the greatness of Russian by suggesting women have children using the sperm of Vladimir Putin.

International Olympic Committee President, Thomas Bach, recommends that the Olympic charter explicitly name sexual orientation as one of the protected classes in the non-discrimination policy.

The Slovak Constitutional Court may ban same-sex marriage.

Singapore's ban on sex between males is let stand under a 76-year-old law banning such relations.

In Ukraine's oldest cinema, Zhovten, moviegoers watched an LGBT film when the theatre caught fire. Arson is suspected.

In a landmark ruling, Malaysia's Putrajaya Court of Appeal has ruled that it is unconstitutional for the state of Negeri Sembilan to criminalize transgender individuals for "cross dressing."

In Bangalore, about 167 members of the transgender community were taken away by the police and kept at the Beggars' Colony, reports the Bangalore Mirror. Police in that same location have arrested a 32-year-old man for homosexuality after his wife installed secret cameras in their house and recorded him having sex with another man.

Mexico City lawmakers passed a law, 42-0, allowing transgender people to legally change their gender without first going to court.

Meanwhile, in nearby Maryland State Delegate Anne Kaiser has been appointed the chamber's next majority leader while Atlanta's fire chief was suspended without pay after publishing a book calling homosexuality "unclean", "a sexual perversion", "vulgar", and "inappropriate".

These times of variegated acceptance and violence require a multipronged analysis of what may create change.

Marriage Update:

Michigan - Michigan's Republican-controlled House of Representatives has passed a controversial religious freedom bill, teeing up what civil liberties advocates fear will be another wave of GOP-backed legislation that could cripple LGBT rights.
South Carolina - The U.S. Supreme Court won't stop same-sex marriages from taking place in South Carolina following a decision against the state's ban on gay nuptials.
Kansas - The Supreme Court effectively allowed same-sex couples to begin marrying in Kansas in mid-November by denying a stay of the court order striking down the state's ban as unconstitutional.
Montana - A Montana court has permanently enjoined (stopped) the State of Montana and its officers, employees, agents, and political subdivisions from enforcing Article XIII, section 7 of the Montana Constitution, Montana Code Annotated section 40-1-103 and section 40-1-401, and any other laws or regulations, to the extent that they prohibit otherwise qualified same-sex couples from marrying in Montana, and to the extent that they do not recognize same-sex marriages contracted outside Montana.
Louisiana - Five cases by plaintiffs who filed requests with the US Supreme Court on now on record. Kenneth Upton, Lambda Legal, is the lead counsel on the filing to the justices.
Arkansas - US District Judge Kristine G. Baker has ruled that denying marriage for same-sex couples is unconstitutional.

Shatter Every Closet Door:

The Political Fallout of Rep. Mike Fleck's Loss

Where do we go from here? The midterm election has given us more homework to do, and if we refocus, we can win.

By Jason Landau Goodman

All eyes were on Rep. Mike Fleck's re-election campaign.

In understanding where they can side on LGBTQ issues, many Pennsylvania legislators had been paying close attention to the outcome of the 81st House District election. Rep. Mike Fleck, the state's first openly gay legislator, lost his seat in November following a fiercely fought 22-month long campaign. His loss is devastating for many in his district, and thousands of LGBTQ people in Pennsylvania – particularly for rural LGBTQ youth who have lost positive representation in their government and community. Beyond the social impact, Rep. Fleck' defeat has significant political consequences as well. The outcome of this election will be sending a ripple effect throughout the commonwealth.

For a long time, there has been a widespread feeling of trepidation amongst the conservative legislators who control the General Assembly of engaging with LGBTQ issues. And so, there has been silence – even from those conservative legislators that support our causes, or those who are genuinely interested in learning more about LGBTQ issues. This lack of conversation has presented the opportunity to assess how Rep. Fleck performs in the election as their testing ground on LGBTQ issues without getting their own hands into the issues directly. If he lost, and depending by how much, that would be the measure by which they could make their future political calculations. Will supporting LGBTQ issues be worth it? If this Central Pennsylvania district cannot accept an out legislator, will they oust me if I support LGBTQ equality?

Pennsylvania legislators now have evidence to shelve LGBTQ rights.

Legislators on both sides of the aisle have been looking to the 81st district to get a pulse on where middle-Pennsylvania stands. Would they embrace their longtime-adored state legislator in spite of his being out – or, would they oust him in a political subterfuge of bigotry? The latter appears to have become reality.

The Pennsylvania legislature has sustained deep-rooted silence on LGBTQ issues for decades. The status quo has been inaction for nearly 40 years since the first non-discrimination bill was introduced in 1976. When Rep. Mike Fleck came out in December 2012, he bravely helped change the discourse within the Republican majority. No longer was being gay something that could be ignored or be seen as being a complete outsider. He was and will be regarded in history as their respected colleague.

Moderate Republicans have the power. Will they use it?

Yet, as I write this, I wonder if the power of increased popular opinion toward LGBTQ rights could still help push things forward. At least for the moderate Republicans, especially in Eastern Pennsylvania, could his election serve as a shaming wake-up call toward action? Moderate GOP members who support LGBTQ equality have the votes and the power – but we do not know if they will use it. Will suburban Republicans lay themselves down on the line for us? If they do, we can win.

In a small way, Rep. Ron Marsico (R-Dauphin), from suburban Harrisburg, balked at this divide in October 2014 and put the LGBTQ-inclusive hate crimes bill up for a committee vote. He openly pushed back at members of his own party in the House Judiciary Committee during the meeting when several members called for him to table the bill. It ultimately passed 19-4.

The tides are changing in the popular support of LGBTQ equality, especially in moderate areas. Outside of Rep. Fleck's race, it seems that not one other elected official lost because of their support for LGBTQ equality. This is a major development from just a few years ago when a position on marriage equality could cost someone their election.

We will have to look to the new House and Senate leadership for answers.

While there are shifting attitudes with moderate Republican and Democrats in suburban regions, the widening margin of the social conservatives' majority presents a serious blockade against significant progress.

It will take more than half the Republicans in each chamber, likely over two-thirds, to be fully supportive of an LGBTQ-related issue for it to move. While we could have the necessary number of votes to move a non-discrimination bill without a majority of the GOP members, the Republican leadership has not provided evidence it would be willing to fracture its caucus over our issues – as they have for the transportation bill or liquor privatization.

The Republicans will continue a strong rein in both legislative chambers. We do not yet know if it will be led by rural, more socially conservative Republicans, or the more suburban, moderate members. Even a mix of the two could provide progress for us. If the moderates do not secure enough major leadership positions we will likely have another two years of gridlock on LGBTQ equality issues.

Specifically, if we find moderate allies in both the House Speaker and House Majority Leader, then we could actually see HB 300 assigned to a committee with a favorable chair and *not* the State Government Committee with Rep. Daryl Metcalfe (R-Butler) – and actually have it be put up for a vote on the House floor.

Money is where the heart is.

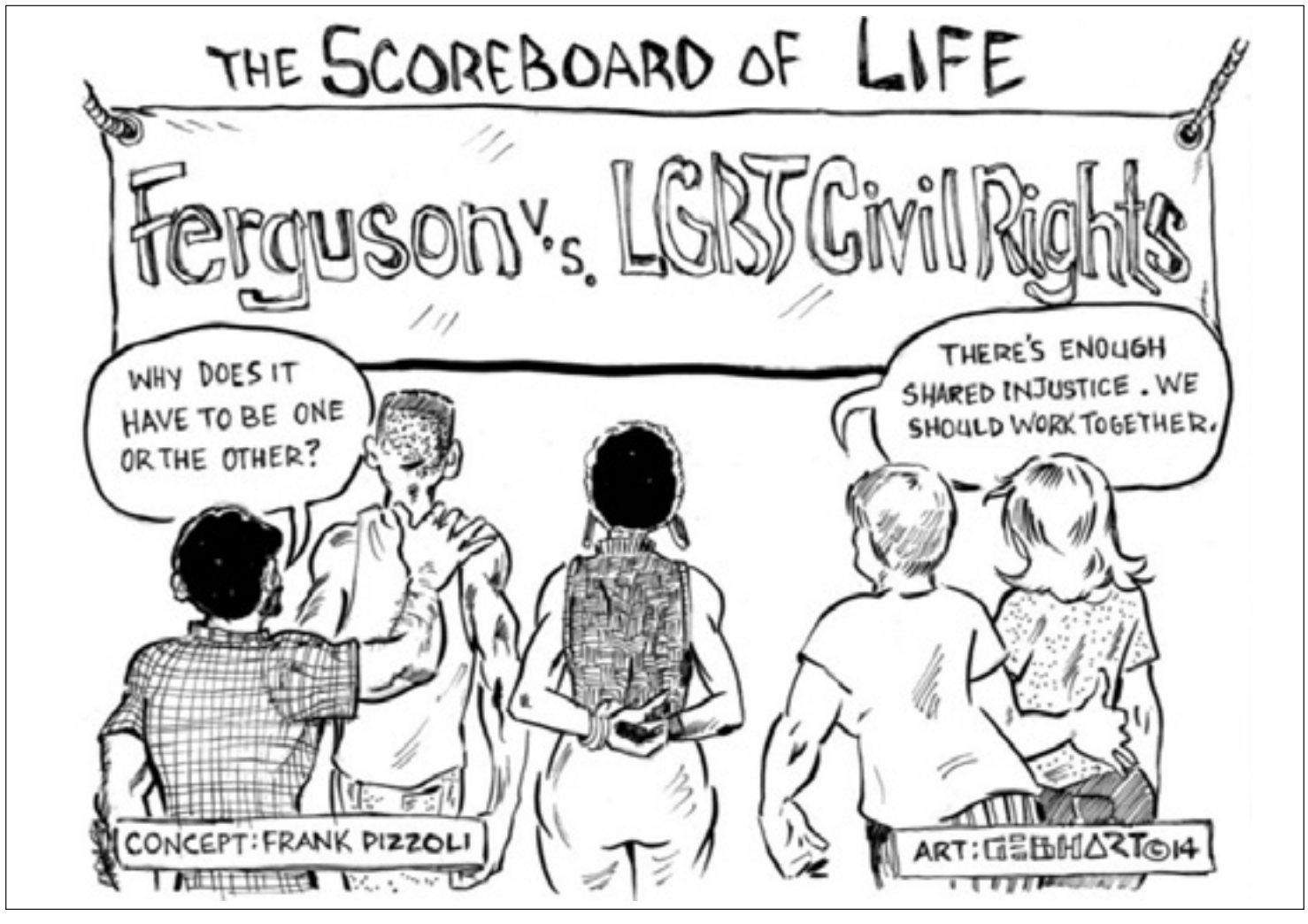
One of our strongest indicators of this progress is within the many Republican House members who gave to Rep. Fleck's campaign. An extremely diverse network of conservative Republicans came to his support. It would be one thing for a sitting legislator, running for re-election themselves, to say they support their friend Mike Fleck. It is quite another to give their money to his re-election campaign. More than a dozen Republican House members gave over $35,000 to Rep. Fleck's campaign. A full list is available online at the Keystone Student Voice.

Will Gov. Tom Wolf make deals to advance LGBTQ rights?

Another factor for us in the 2015-2016 session will be Governor-elect Tom Wolf. He ran on a pro-LGBTQ rights platform. However, in the partisan world we live in, he will be faced with a legislature that may not be set out to work with him. If he can develop meaningful relationships with the legislative leaders, he could help us press for victories. Only time can tell.

It is my greatest hope that Rep. Fleck's loss will not be a cautionary tale against supporting LGBTQ people. I am upset in thinking how many have viewed this race as a referendum on being out in rural Pennsylvania. I would rather us understand this in the spirit of Harvey Milk. If Rep. Mike Fleck should lose re-election, let that loss shatter every closet door.

We have had enough. If rural LGBTQ Pennsylvanians rise up – and if LGBTQ advocates in our cities reach out across the divide to help – there is nothing our community cannot accomplish. This work to nudge the movable middle of state legislators into becoming true LGBTQ allies is possible, but it will take a serious commitment from us all.


THE SCOREBOARD OF LIFE
Ferguson V.S. LGBT Civil Rights
WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE ONE OR THE OTHER?
THERE'S ENOUGH SHARED INJUSTICE. WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER.
CONCEPT: FRANK PIZZOLI
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 continued from page 3

• Indian Man Arrested for Gay Sex

Police in the Indian technology hub Bangalore have arrested a 32-year-old man for homosexuality after his wife installed secret cameras in their house and recorded him having sex with another man. This may be the first case of someone arrested for consensual sex under India's law criminalizing "sex against the order of nature" since it was reinstated by India's Supreme Court in December 2013. The wife said in a statement filed with police that she decided to install secret cameras because, after one year of marriage, "there is no sexual contact between me and my husband." She said she had been "suffering thinking that my life was ruined," and called for the police to "take legal action against my homosexual husband." She also said her parents, who arranged the marriage with his parents, "have suffered mental trauma," and asked police to take action against her in-laws for having "cheated me and got him married to me." India has had a law against homosexuality on the books since it was a British colony, but prosecutions under the code, known as Section 377, have been relatively rare. More often, the provision has been used by police for extortion or harassment of LGBT people, according to Indian human rights activists, such as occurred in November 2013 when 13 people were arrested under the provision in the middle of the night in the city of Hassan in the state of Karnataka. The law was technically unenforceable at the time of this sweep, because the Delhi High Court had struck down 377 in 2009 as a ruling as a violation of LGBT people's human rights.

• MD Delegate, Lesbian, Appointed Leader

MD State Delegate Anne Kaiser has been appointed the chamber's next majority leader by MD House Speaker Michael Busch (D-Anne Arundel County). A lesbian, Kaiser has been a member of the House Ways and Means Committee since 2003. Since 2007, she has also chaired the House Education Subcommittee.

• Fire Chief Suspended after Anti-gay Comments

Atlanta's fire chief was suspended without pay after publishing a book calling homosexuality "unclean", "a sexual perversion", "vulgar", and "inappropriate". The book titled Who Told You That You Were Naked? was authored by Atlanta's Fire Chief, Kelvin Cochran. Firefighters had complained after saying they received copies of his book in the workplace. The summary of the book refers to God's words to Adam in the Bible: From God's perspective nakedness meant so much more. It meant condemnation and deprivation to his most precious creation-mankind. Though He reconciled Adam's condition by clothing him in coats of lambs' skin, Adam never got over what he had done. Condemnation has dominated ever since. Now we have a more permanent solution. We have been clothed with Christ! Redeemed men who carry the curse of condemnation and deprivation cannot fulfill their purpose as husbands, fathers, community and business leaders-world changers!

Two specific passages of the book were cited for their anti-gay stance: "Uncleanness — whatever is opposite of purity; including sodomy, homosexuality, lesbianism, pederasty, bestiality, all other forms of sexual perversion." "Naked men refuse to give in, so they pursue sexual fulfillment through multiple partners, with the opposite sex, the same sex and sex outside of marriage and many other vile, vulgar and inappropriate ways which defile their body-temple and dishonor God." Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed said, "I will not tolerate discrimination of any kind within my administration."

• D.C. Council Boots 'conversion therapy'

The Washington Blade reports that the D.C. City Council has voted unanimously to give final approval to two far-reaching LGBT rights bills, including one that bans so-called conversion therapy that seeks to change minors under the age of 18 from gay to straight. The Conversion Therapy for Minors Prohibition Act of 2014 would make D.C. the third jurisdiction in the U.S., after California and New Jersey, to ban the therapy for minors on grounds that mental health experts have shown it to be harmful and dangerous for those who undergo such therapy.

"Conversion therapy has been denounced by every mainstream medical and mental health association, including the American Medical Association and American Psychological Association," the Human Rights Campaign said in a statement.

• Marriage: Supreme Court Showdown?

A Missouri state court judge has ruled the state's ban on same-sex couples' marriages is unconstitutional, allowing same-sex couples to marry in St. Louis. The state had filed the lawsuit over the summer to stop St. Louis officials from issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

A Federal appeals court has also upheld four states' same-sex marriage bans. Deciding differently, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals splits with other federal appeals courts, upholding Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee's bans. The decision sets up a likely Supreme Court showdown over the issue. "When the courts do not let the people resolve new social issues like this one, they perpetuate the idea that the heroes in these change events are judges and lawyers," their decision said. "Better in this instance, we think, to allow change through the customary political processes, in which the people, gay and straight alike, become the heroes of their own stories by meeting each other not as adversaries in a court system but as fellow citizens seeking to resolve a new social issue in a fair-minded way."

The 6th Circuit Court ruling runs counter to a rapid string of victories favoring gay marriage, now legal in more than 30 states. Four other U.S. appeals courts in other regions of the country ruled in recent months that states cannot ban gay matrimony. Observers say that this split in legal decisions between lower, appellate courts further insures that the US Supreme Court will soon have to make a final decision on the matter.

• Elton John Foundation Funds Project

The Transgender Law Center announce a new partnership with the Elton John AIDS Foundation to develop a constituent-driven strategy to reduce structural inequities that drive high rates of HIV incidents in transgender communities. The funding is for one year and will enable Transgender Law Center to form a diverse national advisory board of eight to ten trans people living with HIV, with strong focus on trans women of color. The advisory board will assist in a systems gap assessment, identify best and promising practices in community response to HIV, and issue recommendations. Cecilia Chung, Senior Strategist of Transgender Law Center, will leads the effort to change the course of the HIV epidemic in trans communities and improve health outcomes for those who have been diagnosed. "With the support of the advisory board, the center will engage the community meaningfully in the examination of how systemic barriers and social conditions (such as discrimination, transphobia, criminalization and violence) drive the HIV epidemic and negatively impact health outcomes." she said.

• Oh, oh, Mexico

Mexico City lawmakers passed a law allowing transgender people to legally change their gender without first going to court. The vote was 42-0 in favor. Six lawmakers abstained. Manuel Granados Covarrubias of the Party of the Democratic Revolution, known by the Spanish acronym PRD, welcomed the proposal's approval. "It eliminates cumbersome trials and judicial proceedings, procedures, to generate the administrative change of a legal action to which everyone has the right," said Granados in a press release the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District released after lawmakers approved the measure. "Their dignity is also recognized." The Mexico City Commission to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination, known by its Spanish acronym COPRED, launched a campaign in support of the measure.

• Armed Forces: What's the Hold Up?

The American Military Partner Association has publicly called on the Department of Defense (DoD) to include "sexual orientation" as a part of their non-discrimination policy and equal opportunity program which the DoD is currently revising. According to sources involved with the program, current revisions under way will continue to exclude "sexual orientation." While every other department of the federal government has added sexual orientation to their non-discrimination policies, over three years after the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT), the DoD has not updated its policy or equal opportunity program to include protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation for uniformed troops. "Because the military takes pride in sustaining a culture free of discrimination where all who serve are treated with dignity and respect, the Defense Department should recognize that including sexual orientation as part of the non-discrimination policy is the next step toward full inclusion," said Ashley Broadway, AMPA's Director of Family Readiness and spouse of a U.S. Army officer. "We have thousands of service members and their families who for years were discriminated against under the threat of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', and while they can now serve openly and honestly, the Defense Department continues to exclude them in their non-discrimination policy – the very place they need protection."

• Lambda Legal, ACLU Ask for Review

Lambda Legal, the ACLU and private firm Gerhardstein & Branch filed a petition asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling upholding discriminatory bans on marriage rights for same-sex couples in Ohio and three other states. The Sixth Circuit is the only federal circuit court after the Supreme Court's watershed 2013 Windsor ruling to uphold such bans and departs from recent decisions from the from the 4th, 7th, 9th, and 10th Circuits which have led to the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in many more states throughout the country.

• Equality Thrives, Hate Can't Keep Lights On

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) notes that if you want clear evidence that LGBT equality is winning, you got a perfect example in the National Organization for Marriage (NOM). Consider this contrast. On the one hand, NOM, the nation's chief anti-marriage and anti-LGBT advocacy group, finally posted their IRS 990s. The result? Their revenues are down by more than half—dropping from nearly $11 million in 2012, to just over $5 million in 2013. Just two anonymous donors made up more than half of the organizations funding, and NOM ended last year with more than $2.5 million in debt. On the other hand, today, HRC announced that a record number of America's top companies and law firms have a perfect record in supporting LGBT equality. These aren't radical brands. Today, even American corporate giants like General Electric and Proctor & Gamble support full equality. P&G even seized this opportunity to announce their support for marriage equality today. In a release, HRC said: LGBT equality still has a long way to go, and we've got big battles still ahead of us. But if you were a betting person, which side would you pick? The side with the company that makes the light bulbs? Or the side that without enough support to keep the lights on?

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Are Gay Rights being pitted against Black Civil Rights?

LET'S TALK

By Shaashawn Dial-Snowden

Yoruba Richen is a documentary filmmaker, director, producer, and writer whose film The New Black recently screened in Lancaster and Harrisburg. Her film is an explosive new documentary that uncovers the complicated and often combative histories of the African-American and LGBT civil-rights movements. The documentary tells the story of how the African-American community is grappling with the gay rights issue in light of the recent gay marriage movement and the fight over civil rights.

Richen shares her candid thoughts on the controversial question: Is the gay rights movement being pitted against the African-American civil rights movement?

Central Voice: In 2008, the question: How was the gay rights movement being pitted against the civil rights movement? to make The New Black. Do you still believe the gay rights movement is being pitted against the African-American civil rights movement?

Yoruba Richen: What's been interesting is seeing how the politics have shifted and progressed with advances and set backs on all levels. Maryland passed a bill in 2012 because they did a better job of working with groups on the ground. I don't think lines are as drawn as they were in 2008, but there are still issues that black LGBT folk are dealing with and want in the forefront of the movement, yet, they feel marriage equality has taken over everything. There are some divisions that fall into class and race lines.

I do think at the same time there are lessons learned from Prop 8.

CV: A female voice opens your movie with "All of a sudden it was black versus gay." How did you decide that was the starting point?

YR: Well, the biggest reason I was moved to make the film was from my own personal experience of feeling torn on the same evening with the passing of Prop 8 and election of Barack Obama. It was also Sharon's (Sharon Lettman-Hicks Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Black Justice Coalition) experience of feeling torn and frustrated too, understanding the dynamic and context for blacks, gays, and black members of the LGBT community. The film goes back in history and follows the fight for marriage equality in Maryland to the present moment (2012).

CV: What was the most common reason given by self-identified members of black churches who oppose marriage equality to explain their resistance to comparing the gay civil rights movement with the black civil rights movement?

YR: It was captured in the film by a woman who expressed the sentiment that, "I had no choice to be black, so how can you compare black and gay." The underlying sentiment felt by the opposition is being gay is a choice, something you can hide. You can't hide being black.

CV: Where you surprised to capture such statements from marriage equality opponents on film?

YR: It was my intention to get a wide array of feelings on film. I was pleased to capture the sharing of their stories and lives with me.

CV: Susan Sontag wrote: "Martyrdom is a hard legacy to disown." Does the black community, still struggling in many ways with issues of economic justice, find it difficult to make room for other social justice issues?

YR: Yes, I do. Partially due to the fact that we are still dealing with life and death issues as seen in recent events. The black community is dealing with issues like health - evident in the released World Aids Day statistics. (Black women account for the largest share of new HIV infections among women, 6,100, or 64% in 2010), and the incidence rate among black women is 20 times the rate among white women and over 4 times the rate among Latinas. Black women also account for the largest share of women living with an HIV diagnosis at the end of 2010 (60%)". For some people it is hard to see race as its own kind of fight and nothing can compete with that, we know that is not true; as women LGBT folks we are dealing with multiple oppressions.

CV: A voice in your movie says: "If we don't reach out to these people, who's gonna reach out to these people?" Is that practical? How?

YR: Yes, in multiple ways. One way is to engage people. We see Karess (Karess Taylor-Hughes a field organizer for Equality Maryland and The Human Rights Campaign) walking the stress of Baltimore in the film and having a conversation with several black males. I'm pleased this film has fostered conversations about the issues. Other ways to reach out include education centered on facts, debates, understanding, and conversation.

CV: The film makes the point: "This is the unfinished business of black people being free." What does that mean?

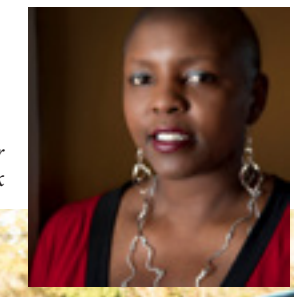
YR: "That statement was from Sharon (Sharon Lettman-Hicks). She means LGBT liberation is part of a racial justice liberation movement and vice versa; they are connected. If there are some people in the black community who are LGBT who do not have their rights, than the black community hasn't fought for everyone."

CV: Can you explain the term "otherizied" for someone who may not be familiar with it?

YR: Otherizing is a concept I've been familiar with in social justice work, that is part of what we do when we discriminate against someone.

CV: What is your reaction to clergy and politicians who oppose marriage equality because they say their congregations or constituents are not yet ready for change?

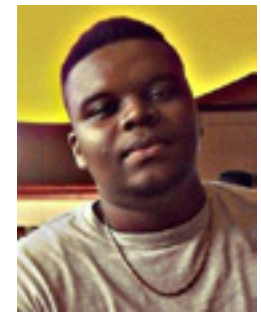
YR: I think one thing important to remember is black clergy have historically been slow on issues. During the 60s civil rights movement some clergy felt Martin Luther King, Jr. was going too fast and going too far. It is not uncommon for clergy or politicians to not want to push too far or rock the boat because: (1) they are scared for what the outcome could be (2) to maintain status quo which is human nature for some and (3) the religious argument that they can't condone marriage equality because of the laws of God.



(right)Yoruba Richen is a documentary filmmaker
(below) A scene from The New Black

Gay Orgs Respond to Ferguson Decision

Excerpts compiled from organizational news releases following a Ferguson Grand jury's decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown.



Michael Brown

National Youth Council of Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network): For young people in this country, today's grand jury decision not to indict Darren Wilson sends a grave message. We live in a society where young people struggle every day against systems that push black youth and other youth of color out of school and into the punitive justice system of expulsion, police brutality, prison, and even death. These systems of oppression have ended countless lives, including the life of Michael Brown. This verdict sends youth the message that our lives, bodies and communities are expendable and that we are not worthy of basic compassion and justice.

National Center for Lesbian Rights: The facts surrounding the shooting have been the subject of debate, but it is beyond dispute that Brown was unarmed, and several witness accounts state that Wilson shot Brown while he had his hands raised in surrender. While the jury deliberated, Ferguson and the surrounding area have become a flashpoint for racial tension and unrest in reaction to the tragic shooting. Ferguson, which is predominantly black, has a police force that is predominantly white. The shooting has reignited an intense debate about law enforcement and race in this country. Citizen protests have been met by accusations of "rioting" and other racially charged descriptions, while a heavily armed police force has transformed Ferguson into a police state.

United We Dream: "Today, immigrant youth across the country are coming together in one voice saying, 'We are all Mike Brown.' The reality is that there is no place for racial bias in policing, and it's something that continues to affect all people of color. Ferguson is an example of what happens around the country, this is why it resonates with so many of us.

Lambda Legal: While there will be debate and disagreement about the facts that led to the grand jury decision announced today in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by Police Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO, there is no debate about the facts that a terrible tragedy took place and that another unarmed young black man lost his life at the hands of a police officer.

Around the country, we continue to witness similar tragedies and loss of life that have resulted from the deadly combination of racism, police profiling, excessive use of lethal force and a general disregard for the lives of black and brown people.

Human Rights Campaign: In August, HRC joined dozens of prominent national and local LGBT and other civil rights organizations in an open letter of solidarity with the family of Michael Brown. The letter said, in part - The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community cannot be silent at this moment, because LGBT people come from all races, creeds, faiths and backgrounds, and because all movements of equality are deeply connected. We are all part of the fabric of this nation and the promise of liberty and justice for all is yet to be fulfilled.

National Center for Transgender Equality: Transgender people know all too well that profiling of certain types of people by the police happens, especially to people of color, lower income people, young people and, of course, transgender people. Extensive violence against transgender people and others really happens—and sometimes at the hand of police. Trans people—particularly trans women of color—are frequent targets of both profiling and violence by police officers and others.

Get Equal: The decision to not indict Officer Darren Wilson is yet another example of the devaluation of black lives that occurs each day in cities and towns across the United States.

The State Policies and institutions that not only allow but that permit the profiling, harassment, and unjust treatment of any human being -- regardless of who they are, where they live, what they look like, or who they love -- are an affront to the values this country espouses. Tonight we saw that the system of law and order in which we have been taught to trust is, again, unworthy of our trust. Our struggles are not the same, but they are connected. The policies and institutions that give permission to lock up and dehumanize queer black and brown folks are the same policies and institutions that give police officers the right to kill unarmed black men and women without recourse. We are committed to protesting together, building a grassroots movement together, and doing the ongoing work of dismantling these unjust institutions together.

Pride at Work: The decision of the grand jury not to indict Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown feels like a punch in the gut to many. In the labor movement, we fight every day to make sure everyone is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve on the job and in the public square. Our black brothers and sisters need and deserve a system that doesn't fail them so tragically and with such frequency.

Protesters in the streets following Michael Brown announcement.

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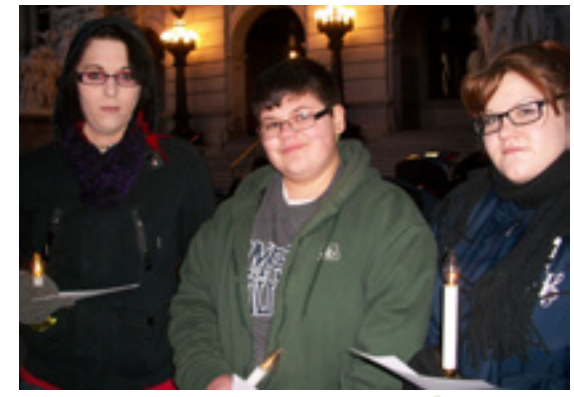
Local Transgender Day of Remembrance

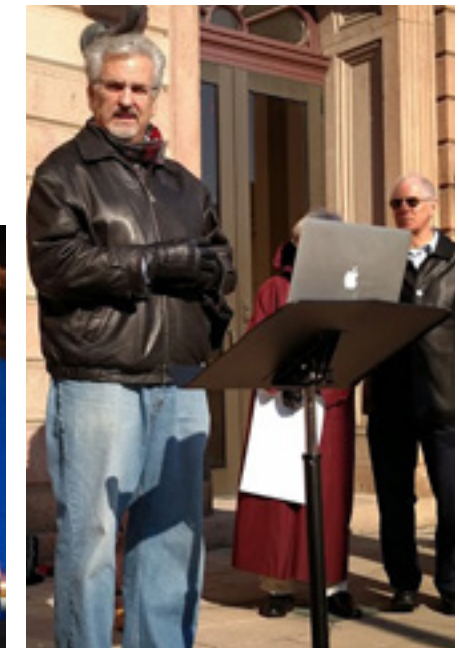


"They are an oppressed minority within an oppressed minority." That's how Rev. Chad Martin, associate pastor of Lancaster's Community Mennonite Church, described transgender people within the LGBT community to Lancaster Online.

Nov. 20 marked National Transgender Day of Remembrance when groups gathered in Lancaster and Harrisburg to honor the memory of those killed in acts of anti-transgender violence. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on Nov. 28, 1998 kicked off the "Remembering Our Dead" web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999.Rita Hester's murder - like most anti-transgender murder cases - has yet to be solved.

In Lancaster, the Community Mennonite Church, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Lancaster, Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ and Grace UCC came together.

In Harrisburg, about 50 people gathered on the steps of the Pennsylvania State Capital to remember transgender individuals in an annual candlelight ceremony.



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LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director

We honor these lives by reading names

Once again, this Nov. 20 a group gathered in the cold on the steps of the Capitol building in Harrisburg to observe Transgender Day of Remembrance. The gathering is important and meaningful and necessary; and the need to hold it shows no sign of going away anytime soon.

For those who are unfamiliar with the event, Transgender Day of Remembrance takes place annually on Nov. 20, and serves as a way to communally remember those whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. We honor these lives by reading names and background information, and a summary of how their lives were taken from us.

One of the important functions of this event is to honor these individuals' true identities, as so many transgender murder victims are misgendered in mainstream media outlets which cling to inaccurate names and genders assigned at birth. Transgender people experience acts of violence at rates far greater than the broader population, and misgendering transgender murder victims hurts in a number of ways. Misgendering takes away dignity, fails to educate about transgender lives, and communicates to transgender people and their loved ones that their lives don't matter.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

The intentional and radical act of remembering - in this case, remembering those lost to anti-transgender violence - is so important to community. Growing up participating in a church that followed the liturgical year, I grew to value ceremony and tradition. One of the meaningful ways people in my congregation, and in the broader tradition, remembered who we were as a people was to come together in community to speak certain words on certain days, while taking lessons with us into other parts of our lives.

I no longer choose to participate in a faith community in this way, but have fortunately maintained a sense that it is important to come together and speak truths into existence with one another. In my view, it is a fundamental act of building community, and we can be a community with one another by being together, saying out loud that it is wrong for anyone to lose their life to anti-transgender violence, and share the stories of those we've lost this past year to this kind of violence.

And similarly, we can take these lessons with us, outside of this ceremony, to our home and our work and our social circles and even to our social media platforms. We can remember to use the correct names and pronouns of transgender people, and to ask if we don't know. We can acknowledge that if we feel uncomfortable when we don't know someone's gender that it says that we need to do more work to challenge the systems that maintain that discomfort. We can remember to actively take part in creating communities where transgender people are welcome, included, and celebrated.

And we can remember to keep showing up on November 20 until no one's life is ended by way of anti-transgender violence.

The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

transgender column

By Joanne Carroll
president of TransCentralPA

Get Behind Gov. Wolf

For those of us that identify as LGBT the election results from Nov. 4 are on their face appalling. I am confident that all of us experienced a sense of doom and gloom.

The only bright spot is that we can eagerly anticipate the inauguration of Governor-Elect Tom Wolf. Perhaps as I did, you read in pre-election interviews on Pennlive.com or in the York Daily Record or on Wolf's campaign web site that we finally may have a truly ally in this man.

Wolf unambiguously stated his support for the inclusion of all LGBT identified persons in the anti-discrimination and hate crimes legislation introduced during the last legislative session. He stated that he believes all of us have the right to fair housing, fair employment and all the other perquisites that come with full equality. His stating that his company already has many LGBT employees and that the company has a fully inclusive diversity policy further heartened me.

Perhaps knowing that Tom Wolf is the governor will help us unify our efforts as we move the full equality agenda forward. In some way this is challenging because our community is perhaps, more diverse than we realize (the list nearly challenges in number the menu at Baskin-Robbins). To say we are LGBT is leaving out so many others that are just as marginalized as we are. We could nearly use the acronym, LGBTQIAPADP (there are more, do not ask me to list each one).

Please understand that I am not making light of our variances, the list really brings home to me just how diverse we really are. This brings me to an important point, the operating imperative of solidarity between everyone huddled under the umbrella of the LGBT identified. I am certain there will come a time in the first 100 days of the Governor-elect Wolf's administration when we receive the call to stand proudly with him in the fight for equality.

On the surface, it sounds like a no brainer, who could possibly derail the train? Would it surprise you if I said, "We could". As a community, we can only get this done with the help of others. We must enlist the help of our friends and other allies, our work colleagues, the clergy of open, affirming and welcoming congregations, and for certain, our families.

Each person in the groups I named can help by writing letters of support to legislators, by signing petitions endorsing the approval of the amendments, and by engaging others in a conversation defining diversity and the need to celebrate it not marginalize it.

There is one important piece of the equation that I saved to the last for an important reason. Each of us, regardless of the walk we are on, must be in unity with one another on this issue. Those opposed to this legislative action would like nothing better than to discover that some of us, while we like the concept, because of our biases might just as soon have one of the flavors removed from the menu.

I would hope that we are bigger than that. At all costs, every one of us under that really big umbrella must embrace each of us who would seek its protection. Houses divided against themselves do not stand.

I have no problem with telling you that you may count on TransCentralPA as an active participant in the fight for the rights of all of us. *We are in it to win it….what about you?*

Joanne Carroll is president of TransCentralPA, which provides advocacy and support, for transgender individuals, their significant others, families, friends and allies and gender education and information to businesses, organizations, educational institutions and governmental agencies.

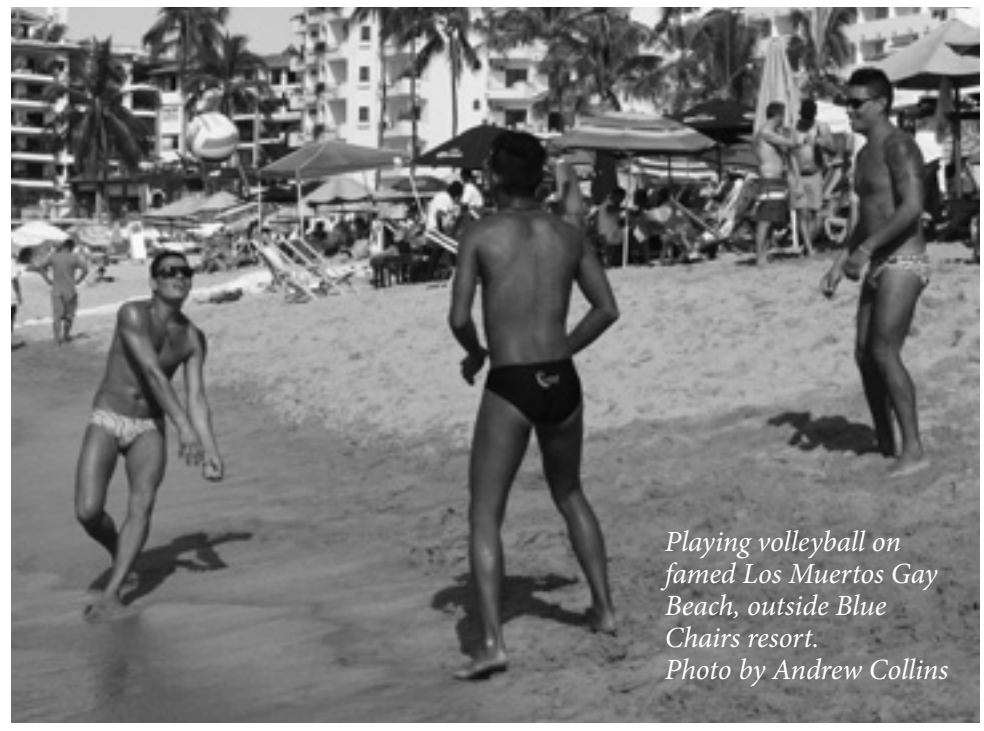
AGING:

Senior Action in a Gay Environment recently released Out and Visible: The Experiences and Attitudes of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Older Adults, Ages, 45-75, a comprehensive report based on a national survey of more than 1,800 LGBT older adults.

FINDINGS:

> Forty-two percent of LGBT older people are very or extremely concerned that they will outlive the money they have saved for retirement, as compared to 25% of non-LGBT people;
> One in eight (13%) LGBT adults and one in four (25%) transgender adults say that they have been discriminated against when searching for housing on the basis of their sexual orientations or gender identities, respectively, and
> 44% of LGBT older people are very or extremely concerned that they will have to work well beyond retirement age in order to have enough money to live on, as compared to 26% of non-LGBT people.

PUERTO VALLARTA



Playing volleyball on famed Los Muertos Gay Beach, outside Blue Chairs resort. Photo by Andrew Collins

It's hard to name a gay resort destination in North America that has more going for it than Puerto Vallarta, a fast-growing city on the Pacific Coast's fabled Mexican Riviera. PV's historic downtown (El Centro) is hemmed in by the verdant slopes of the Sierra Madre Mountains. Just south of El Centro, in Zona Romantica, you'll find a bustling gay scene comprising trendy cocktail bars, hopping dance clubs, scene-y open-air restaurants, and inviting hotels and condo rentals just steps from the beach. Despite its growing popularity, the city is still a relative bargain compared with the United States, the Caribbean, and even some other resort areas in Mexico. On just about any budget, you can eat well and stay in a comfortable room near the beach in this inviting, friendly destination that's now one of the hottest LGBT resort communities in the world – a favorite place both to vacation and retire to.

With a population of roughly 255,000, Puerto Vallarta (visitpuertovallarta.com/travel-guide/lgbt-friendly) no longer bears much resemblance to the carefree and isolated fishing port that provided the 1963 filming location for the critically acclaimed film adaptation of Tennessee Williams's play _The Night of the Iguana_. In recent years, PV has developed into a world-class gay mecca. Resources for LGBT visitors are many, including GayGuideVallarta.com and GayPV Magazine (gaypv.mx).

Zona Romantica is a compact patchwork of hilly lanes tucked beneath the Sierra Madre foothills. The neighborhood fringes Los Muertos Beach, and narrow auto and pedestrian bridges connect the district with El Centro. The beachfront location of Zona Romantica, as well as its elegantly faded veneer and historic charm, accounts for its ever-increasing draw among gay visitors and bohemian types. It's a neighborhood that celebrates its diversity – everyone is welcome, but especially during the bustling high season (from about December through April), certain blocks of Zona Romantica seem about as gay as any in North America.

There are a few more general attributes that further enhance Puerto Vallarta's standing. Again, it's reasonably priced. Dinner entrées at top restaurants rarely cost more than $20 and often run for $10 to $15. Hotel rates, cab rides, cocktails, fashionable clothing and handcrafted gifts also tend to come at fair prices, although it's definitely possible to find high-end exceptions.

It helps to understand Spanish, but you can get by easily in PV speaking only English. And finally, this city set stunningly in the center of Bahia de Banderas (the largest natural bay in Mexico) enjoys a spectacular climate. The city is generally dry and breezy with temperatures in the 80s, the exception being the summer rainy season (generally June through September), when highs often reach the low 90s and humidity can sometimes be oppressive. Puerto Vallarta receives far fewer visitors off-season, and some businesses close for extended periods in summer.

If you're a fan of outdoor activities or are interested in some of the many side excursions available from this area, book a trip through the gay-friendly outfitter Vallarta Adventures. One excellent tour option is the company's thrilling Extreme Zip Line Adventure, which is a tree-top canopy tour, off-roading trip and waterslide experience in a high-jungle adventure park. The company also offers tours of secluded beaches like Yelapa and Las Caletas, as well as whale-watching, scuba and snorkeling, sailing trips, and up-close encounters with bottlenose dolphins and sea lions.

Where to Eat

PV has dozens of outstanding restaurants as well as a slew of hip bars, and the scene is continuously evolving. At the upper end, don't miss Cafe Des Artistes (cafedesartistes.com), a sumptuous spot with refined service and deftly prepared contemporary cuisine. For authentic regional Mexican food served in a charming, warmly furnished dining room, try lesbian-owned El Arrayan (elarrayan.com.mx), where you can sample everything from duck carnitas in an orange-guajillo chile sauce to roasted crispy Oaxacan crickets sautéed with tomatillo-avocado salsa.

Along the beachfront, Daiquiri Dick's (mdi.ddpv.com) is a picturesque spot for a leisurely brunch or lunch, with or without a potent cocktail, and overlooking the water on the north side of El Centro, open-air El Barracuda (elbarracuda.com) serves superb, fresh-caught seafood, such as shrimp al pastor tacos and blacked rare-seared tuna steak.

Just inland from Zona Romantica, the less-touristy Colonia Remance has a few wonderfully romantic restaurants, including the famed Red Cabbage Cafe (redcabbagepv.com), an art-filled dining room that's known for some of the best moles and other classic Mexican dishes in the city, and dapper Casa Naranjo, which serves consistently delicious and inventive Nuevo Latino fare.

You'll find dozens of mostly casual, affordable spots in the heart of Zona Romantica, many along the "restaurant rows" of Basilla Badillo and Olas Altas, which intersect a block from the beach. Reliable options along the latter street include Café San Angel for burgers and tapas, Kabuki Sushi Bar for Japanese food, and The Swedes Bar & Bistro for European classics with a Scandinavian flair. Along Basilla Badillo, check out intimate and lively Joe Jack's Fish Shack (joejacks-fishshack.com) for first-rate seafood, El Mole de Jovita for expertly prepared regional Mexican cooking, and Boccon di Vino for modern Italian fare in a romantic dining room.

Gay Nightlife & Beach Scene

When the mood to socialize strikes you, keep in mind that dance clubs don't get going until late, and they keep pulsing into the wee hours. Socializing over beer or cocktails begins for many visitors quite early in the day at, for instance, one of the beach clubs along scenic Playa Los Muertos (a few blocks south of Zona Romantica's stunning pier, which glows at night with colorful lighting). At three très gay spots along here – Blue Chairs (bluechairs.com), Mantamar (mantamarvallarta.com), and Ritmos Café (ritmoscafe.com) – you can enjoy hobnobbing, dining and eating while lazing under a thatched beach umbrella overlooking the sea.

Early in the evening, head to one of lounges and cocktail bars along Olas Altas and the surrounding blocks. These include convivial lesbian-owned Apaches bar, the jazz club and piano cabaret Garbo, trendy Sama bar, festive La Cueva Cantina and friendly Los Amigos. One of the swankiest and trendiest bar options, La Noche is a gorgeous bi-level lounge with a highly popular upstairs patio. Across the street, CC Slaughters is a hot spot for late-night dancing, and Spartacus Spa is the top gay sauna in the city. And within a few steps of this bustling intersection, you'll also find Paco's Ranch, a fun option for late-night drinking and dancing; and Wet Dreams, which, as its name suggests, showcases buff dudes stripping in showers. Fans of male strippers should also be sure to check out the hot roster of talent at Antropology club, which is a few blocks north.

Other nightlife highlights include one of the campiest bars in town, Reinas, which is decorated as an homage to the British royal family; the Act II Stages complex (actiientertainment.com), which includes a theater, piano bar,and cabaret that presents both local and internationally renowned touring acts, musicals and concerts; Diva's, with its well-attended, dishy drag shows; and Club Enter, which is arguably the top PV venue for late-night dancing, with an emphasis on electronica.

Where to Stay

In Zona Romantica, visitors can choose from a nice mix of gay-friendly options. If you're on a budget and seek a clean, comfortable and friendly gay property in the center of the action, check into the 28-room Hotel Mercurio (hotel-mercurio.com), which is just steps from many gay bars and restaurants (and two blocks from the beach), and offers compact but pleasant rooms and a youthful, social vibe – there's always plenty of frolicking going on around the pool, and the staff is super-friendly. A handsome, contemporary property that's also in the center of the action, Olas Altas Suites (olasaltassuites.com) has three types of reasonably priced units, all of them with full kitchens, flat-screen TVs and attractive, well-chosen furniture. The best units have balconies. A short walk north of Zona Romantica in the historic Old Town, gay-owned Villa David (villadavidpv.com) is the only clothing-optional men's property in PV. This historic hacienda with a tree-shaded pool and courtyard has 10 beautifully appointed rooms – the vibe here very much captures the city's Spanish Colonial heritage.

Puerto Vallarta is also home to one of the most alluring, dramatically situated gay resorts in the world, the stellar Casa Cupula (casacupula.com), which excels as much at its stylish accommodations as it does at its staff, who are friendly, knowledgeable and charming. The 20 rooms range from cozy, more economical rooms to ultra-

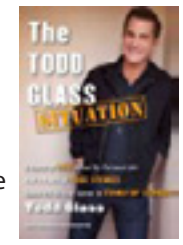
Autobiographies and Memoirs

book reviews

By Deborah Battisti & Lori Lane
Dauphin County Library System

Autobiographies and memoirs are a popular format and some of them can be quite good, like the four below. Whether funny or harrowing (and sometimes both), these glimpses into someone else's life can be an absorbing and uplifting experience.

The Todd Glass Situation : A Bunch Of Lies About My Personal Life And a Bunch Of True Stories About My 30-Year Career In Standup Comedy
by Todd Glass with Jonathan Grotenstein



A hilarious, poignant memoir from comedian Todd Glass about his decision at age forty-eight to finally live openly as a gay man--and the reactions and support from his comedy pals, from Louis CK to Sarah Silverman. Peppered with anecdotes from his life among comedy's greatest headliners and tales of the occasionally insane lengths Todd went through to keep a secret that--let's face it--he probably didn't have to keep for as long as he did…

Teaching The Cat To Sit: A Memoir
by Michelle Theall

A memoir of a gay Catholic woman struggling to find balance between being a daughter and a mother raising her son with a loving partner in the face of discrimination. Theall realizes that in order to be a good mother, she may have to be a bad daughter, as she examines the modern roles of motherhood and religion and demonstrates that our infinite capacity to love has the power to shape us all.

Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?
by Jeanette Winterson

The story of Winterson's childhood and the basis of her novel, *Oranges Aren't the Only Fruit*, this unconventional memoir is about her stranger-than-fiction upbringing in the 1960's by a mother who is also a religious zealot waiting for Armageddon in a gritty industrial town in the north of England.

Neil Patrick Harris : Choose Your Own Autobiography
by Neil Patrick Harris

Sick of deeply personal accounts written in the first person? Seeking an exciting, interactive read that puts the "u" back in "aUtobiography"? Then look no further than *Neil Patrick Harris: Choose Your Own Autobiography*! In this revolutionary, Joycean experiment in light celebrity narrative, actor/personality/carbon-based life-form Neil Patrick Harris lets you, the reader, live his life…

The titles above are just some of the great selections readers will at the Dauphin County Library System. Visit dcls.org or stop by any location to get a library card, so you can check out these and other good books. We've got music and DVDS, too. Info: dcls.org

Puerto Vallarta cont'd

plush suites with magnificent ocean views and private soaking pools. The on-site restaurant Taste (taste.com.mx) serves outstanding Latin-Asian-Mediterranean–fusion fare and is popular both with hotel guests and visitors staying in town. Facilities include a well-stocked gym, a pool and a large open-air lounge with adjacent computer room. The property tumbles down a hillside high above Zona Romantica, a 15-minute walk from the gay beach.

Most gay travelers opt to stay in or near Zona Romantica, but if you'd prefer to chill out at a large mainstream resort that's a bit far from the fray, you'll find plenty of swanky options north of downtown, around the marina. The stylish Westin Resort & Spa (starwoodhotels.com/westin) occupies a gorgeous stretch of beachfront. A 45-minute drive up the coast in a once-sleepy fishing village that's now a chic resort, the Four Seasons (fourseasons.com/puntamita) is one of the most luxurious getaways on Mexico's Pacific Coast. This secluded compound of beautifully appointed casita-style rooms is perfect for a special getaway. Amenities include an inviting spa, two outstanding golf courses, plus tennis, uncrowded beaches, stunning pools and fine restaurants.

The Four Seasons is still close enough to Puerto Vallarta to venture in for dinner or clubbing, and it's just a quick 30-minute hop down the coast from the laid-back surfing village of Sayulita, a bohemian, artsy community with a growing LGBT following and even a couple of gay-owned vacation retreats, including chic Casa Brava (casabravasayulita.com) guest house and inviting, eco-conscious Xocotla (xocotla.com), a bluff-top hideaway with four inviting apartment.

Andrew Collins produces the site GayTravel.About.com and contributes to many other travel magazines and websites.

HEAR ME OUT:

Whitney Houston Live: Her Greatest Performances

By Chris Azzopardi

If anyone epitomized a "moment in time," it was Whitney Houston. At her peak, she unleashed her unmistakable, hit-making voice to seize each one, each song, like it was her last. And then sadly, in 2012 with an impromptu "Jesus Loves Me," one last song did come, as her storied decline led to her shocking death. Preserving just the surface of her iconic pop culture heritage is Legacy Recordings' "Whitney Houston Live: Her Greatest Performances." a bittersweet remembrance of a voice that inspired generations, and a showcase for the unbelievable power it possessed on stage. These are the five greatest "moments" of Whitney's "Greatest Performances", her first-ever live album:

5. I Will Always Love You

There are better versions of Whitney's chart behemoth from _The Bodyguard_ – she's less pristine and strays from the song's biggest challenges – but you can still feel every note of this take from 1994's "The Concert for a New South Africa." Here, her booming belt and unprecedented passion work the sea of people into a frenzy. Despite some vocal compromises, her authenticity is unmatched. Yes, the legendary key-change climax, though still overwhelming, is powered down from the soundtrack cut (she was more on point earlier that same year at a performance in Chile). But her ability to deliver a performance that left a piece of her heart in your hands was a rare quality that would prove as valuable to her career as the voice that delivered it.

4. Greatest Love of All

Whitney never walked in anyone's shadows but her own. And when she performed this, the fourth single from her 1985 self-titled debut, unleashing a towering display of vocal pyrotechnics during that last set of runs, everyone else would have to follow in _hers_. Live from 1990's "That's What Friends Are For: Arista Records 15th Anniversary Concert," Whitney's self-love manifesto remains true to the studio recording even though Houston embellished on the showstopper's original framework. When the chorus comes in, though, she takes you to a familiar place. A life-affirming place. A place only she could.

3. The Star-Spangled Banner

Sweat-drenched and feverish, Houston would turn "The Star-Spangled Banner" into a historical and much-celebrated bench marker. No performer has yet to rival what she did with the anthem during Super Bowl XXV, when she lifted her voice to unmatchable, chill-inducing heights, erupting into a volcano of supreme vocality. That day in January 1991, it didn't matter which team scored the first, or even the last, touchdown – the event had already taken place.

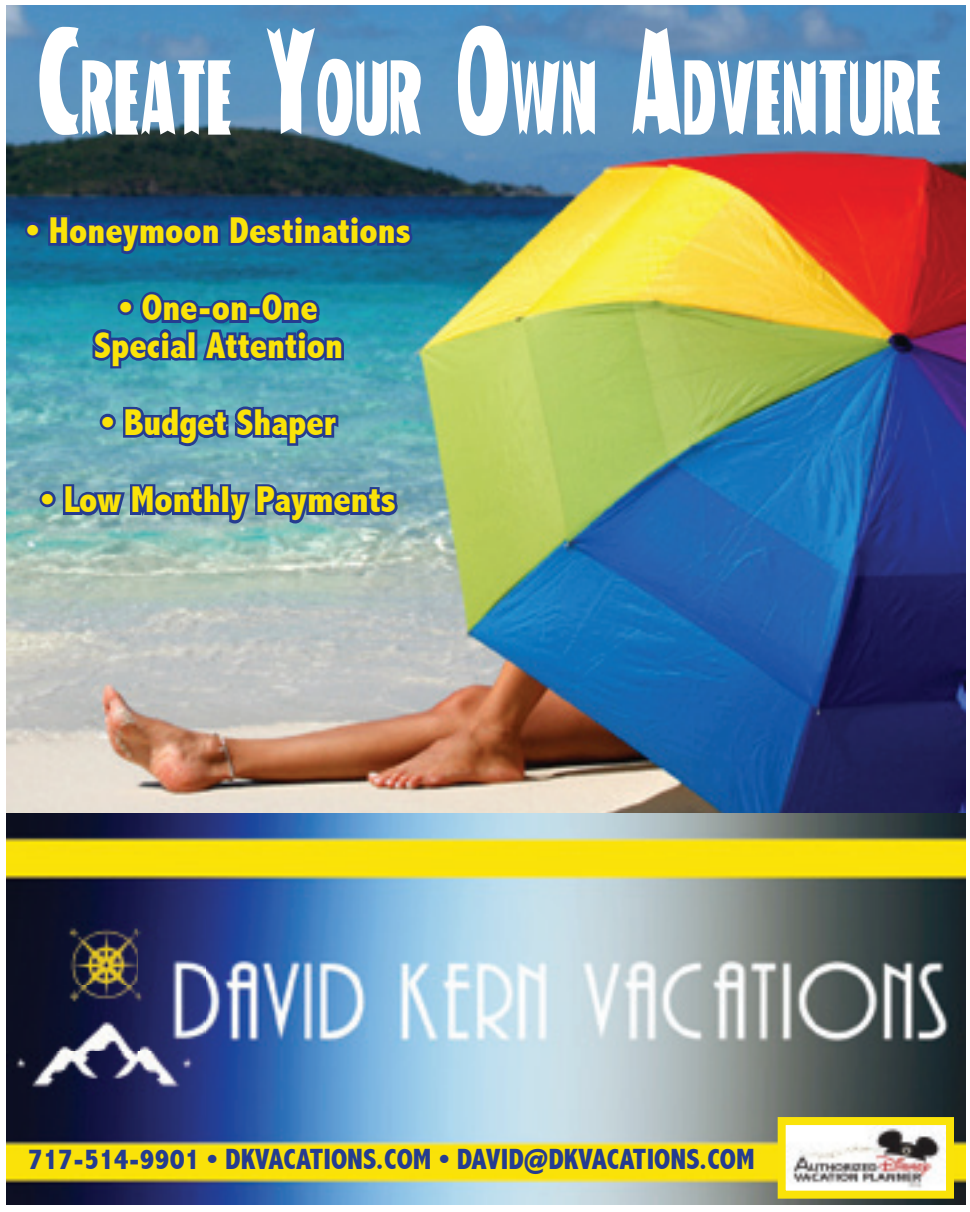
2. A Song For You

In 1991, Whitney took on Leon Russell's classic and turned it into a spectacle. With the clarity, control and soul of a singer in her prime, Houston launched with a crawl, let her voice run to the rafters, and then gently eased her way back to the ground. "A Song For You" wasn't technically a song of "hers", but it might as well have been. She owned every note of it, and not just because of that impressive range – Whitney the Interpreter, for all her vocal prowess, also had a way with words.

1. One Moment in Time

Foreshadowing the "rise and fall" of Whitney's personal and professional life, "One Moment in Time" captured the singer's early-career essence. Though, along with her increasingly inconsistent voice, her passion for performing eventually diminished – the puzzling presence of "I Didn't Know My Own Strength" in 2009 on Oprah demonstrates this sad fact – this was Whitney at her most triumphant. "I will be free," she belted at the 31st Grammy Awards in 1989, giving angel wings to the carpe diem message she so earnestly felt. And then, too soon, free she was.

Chris Azzopardi is the editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBT wire service.



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arts & entertainment

WARE CENTER, LANCASTER

Darrah Carr Dance Irish Extravaganza
Jan. 25, 3 p.m.

Darrah Carr Dance demonstrates the full range of Irish dance. This program features group and step dance, unique fusion works, and traditional Irish Dance Duets. Ware Center, 42 N. Prince St., (717) 871-7018; warecenterinfo@millersville.edu

FULTON THEATRE, LANCASTER

And Then There Were None
Jan. 27-Feb. 15

Eleven people. A mysterious recording. Ten murders. ONE killer. Agatha Christie was quoted as saying "this is the story that launched my career." And what a career it was. Tickets: 717-397-7425 or online

HERSHEY THEATRE

I Love Lucy® Live On Stage
Feb. 17-18, 7:30 p.m.

The brand-new hit stage show adapted from the most beloved program in television history! America's favorite foursome – Lucy, Ricky, Fred and Ethel – is live on stage and in color for the very first time! It's 1952 and you are a member of the studio audience awaiting the filming of two hilarious and oh-so-familiar I LOVE LUCY® episodes. Imagine stepping back in time onto the Desilu Playhouse soundstage where a charming host entertains and enlightens you to the behind-the-scenes filming process, the 1950s hi-fidelity technology and this brand-new thing called "television. Tickets: 1-800-745-3000, HersheyTheatre.com

OPEN STAGE OF HARRISBURG

A Raisin in the Sun
Feb. 2-22, 2 & 8 p.m performances

On Chicago's South Side, Divergent dreams threaten the Younger family. When her deceased husband's money comes through, Mama dreams of moving to a new home and a better neighborhood. Walter Lee plans to buy a liquor store. Beneatha dreams of medical school. The tensions and prejudice they face form this seminal American drama. Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

WHITAKER CENTER

10,000 Maniacs with special guests Paul Barrere & Fred Tackett
Jan. 23, 8 p.m.

One of the most critically acclaimed bands of the last three decades, 10,000 Maniacs were founded by Robert Buck, Dennis Drew, Steven Gustafson, John Lombardo and Natalie Merchant in the fall of 1981. Jerry Augustyniak joined in 1983. Together with artists like R.E.M. they defined college rock and created the first wave of alternative rock bands and what became known as the alternative rock format on FM radio. Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

STRAND CAPITAL

Tubular Bells for Two
Jan. 15, 6-7:30 p.m.

When Mike Oldfield released his 1973 masterpiece, Tubular Bells, it required more than 30 musicians to perform it. Now, 40 years later, performed by just two massively talented musicians, this thrilling show recreates the album on stage, in real time in a unique and compelling theatrical experience. Info: www.mystrandcapitol.org

MAJESTIC THEATRE, GETTYSBURG

Cameron Carpenter
January 23, 2015, 7:30 – 10 p.m.

Grammy nominated organist Cameron Carpenter has shattered the mold, playing the organ like no one before him or since. Carpenter has reinvented the art of playing the organ. Info: 717-337-8200; boxofficeinfo@gettysburg.edu

SHARADIN BIGLER THEATRE

Ephrata Performing Arts Center
February 6 - 22, 2-7:30 p.m.

With a story based on the fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson, this EPAC Kids4Kids production will take you and your family on a fun fantastical journey to a vast underwater kingdom! With a brilliant score that includes uplifting songs like "Under the Sea" and "Part of This World," this musical treasure is designed for young artists as well as younger audiences, making it the perfect family treat! Tickets: (717) 733-7966; epacboxoffice@gmail.com

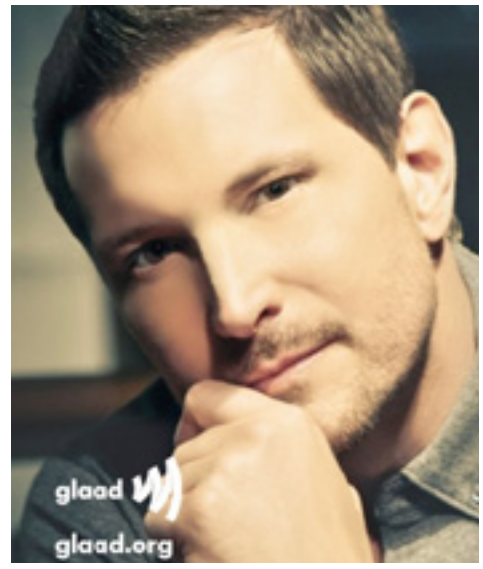
LANCASTER EVENTS

The Hallelujah Girls – Rainbow Dinner Theatre
Jan. 23 - March 21 - A group of gals short on cash but long on friendship turn a vacant church into a hysterical health-and-beauty emporium.

YORK EVENTS

Greenberg's Train and Toy Show
Jan. 10 & 11, 10 a.m - 4 p.m both days - York Expo Center, Model and toy train experts will be on hand with exhibits and informative demonstrations to entertain the whole family! The event includes operating train layouts in a variety of sizes and scales, how-to hobby demonstrations, tables upon tables of shopping at the hobby marketplace and much much more. Diehard train collectors and novice hobbyists will find it hard to resist the lure of the world's greatest hobby! Children 11 and under are FREE. www.GreenbergShows.com

Country Music Star Comes Out



In an exclusive interview with People Magazine, country music star Ty Herndon has come out as gay. The wide ranging interview encompasses Herndon's childhood, his struggle with accepting his sexual orientation, his career in the country music industry, his strong faith, and his hope for LGBT youth.

"Country music is changing its tune on equality," said GLAAD President & CEO Sarah Kate Ellis. "By sharing his story, Ty Herndon is helping to move the needle for LGBT music artists in the country industry. It's personal stories like his that help people understand that gay people can also be Christians, cowboys, and even country music stars."

Herndon cited his faith as something that grounds him. People writes: Both the singer and his partner are practicing Christians, and Herndon says it's taken time to reconcile his faith with his sexuality. But he's getting there.

"I sit on the tailgate of my pickup truck, and I meditate, and I talk to God," he says. "That's really all I need to know. I have a connection to something bigger than myself, and no one's going to tell me that I can't have it. We get to choose who we love, and that includes God, and he loves us back."

Aside from religion, Herndon has had to redefine his place in another establishment: the country music community. As he sees it, the genre has made great strides, which was again demonstrated when Kacey Musgraves won top honors at the CMAs for her LGBT-approving hit "Follow Your Arrow."

"There's never been a song more affirmative of that in country music, and it's our CMA Song of the year," says Herndon, who "welled up in tears" during that moment.

We'll continue to hear more from Ty Herndon. He plans to release another solo album next year, and continue to share his story to inspire others. He has a particular interest in helping young people who are struggling to accept themselves.

"I know there's a lot of those kids still out there. Telling my story is an opportunity to help just one of them. They can be loved by God, they can be married one day, they can have a family, they can give their parents grandkids," Herndon adds. "And they're not broken, they're not sinners and they're perfectly beautiful."

Gamut Theatre Presents Orwell's 1984

With Edward Snowden and the film about him, CitizenFour, edgy theatrree goers won't want to miss Gamut Theatre Group's Stage Door Production of George Orwell's 1984, adapted by Robert Owens, Wilton E. Hall, Jr., and William A. Miles, Jr., Jan. 16-17, 23-24, 7:30 p.m. at Gamut Classic Theatre in Strawberry Square, Harrisburg.

All productions in the Stage Door Series are Bring Your Own Price, where any size donation buys admission to the show. The Series' motto is "Come as you are, pay what you will."

Based on George Orwell's iconic novel, 1984 is set in a dystopian future and tells the story of Winston Smith, a cog in the giant machine state of Oceania. Physically and mentally under the omnipresent eye of Big Brother, Winston is struggling for scraps of love and freedom in a world awash with distrust and violence.

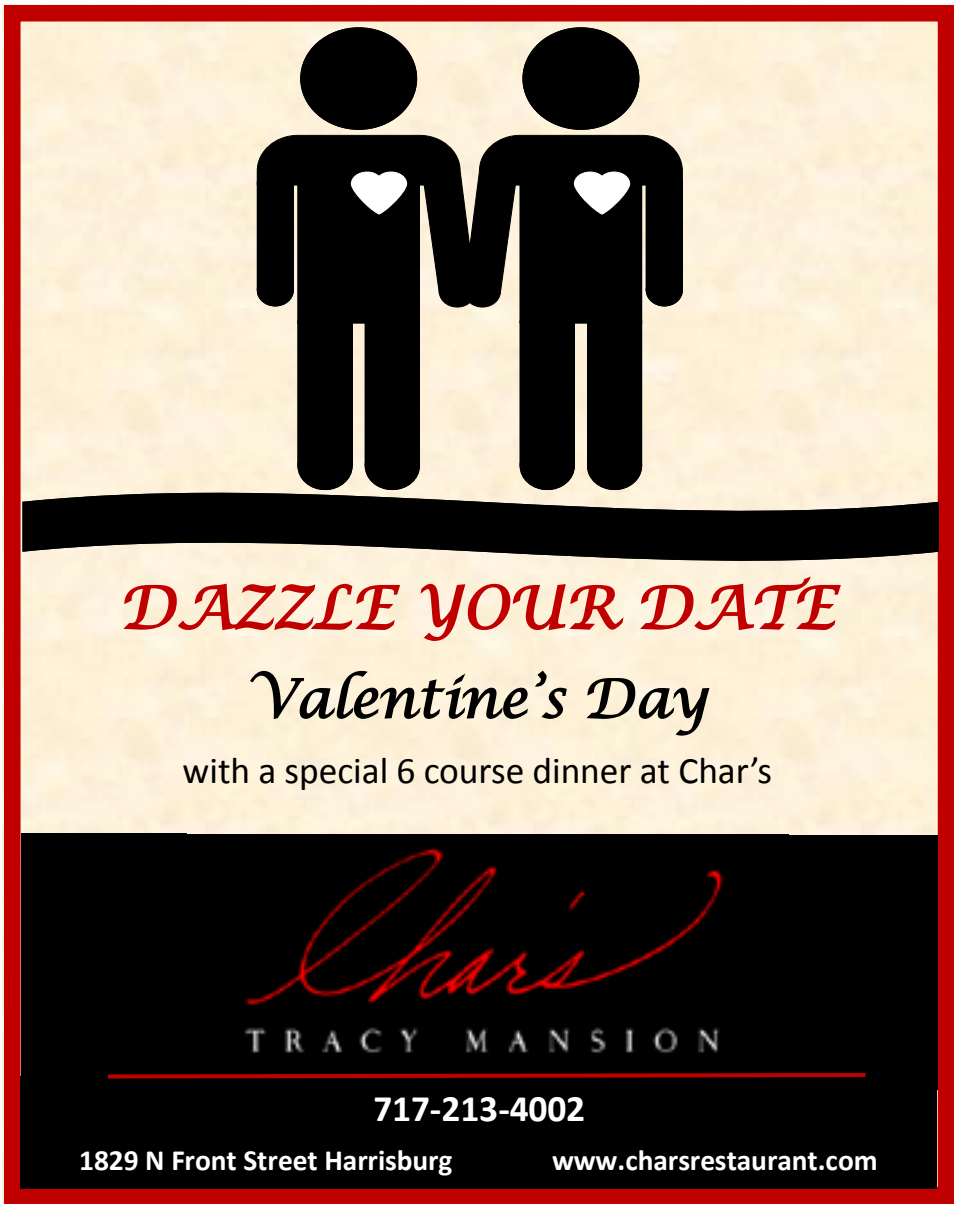
Director Jeff Luttermoser, whose past Stage Door Series directorial endeavors include Dracula and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, feels that although the novel was written in the late 1940s and is based on a fictionalized 1984, the story is still relevant.

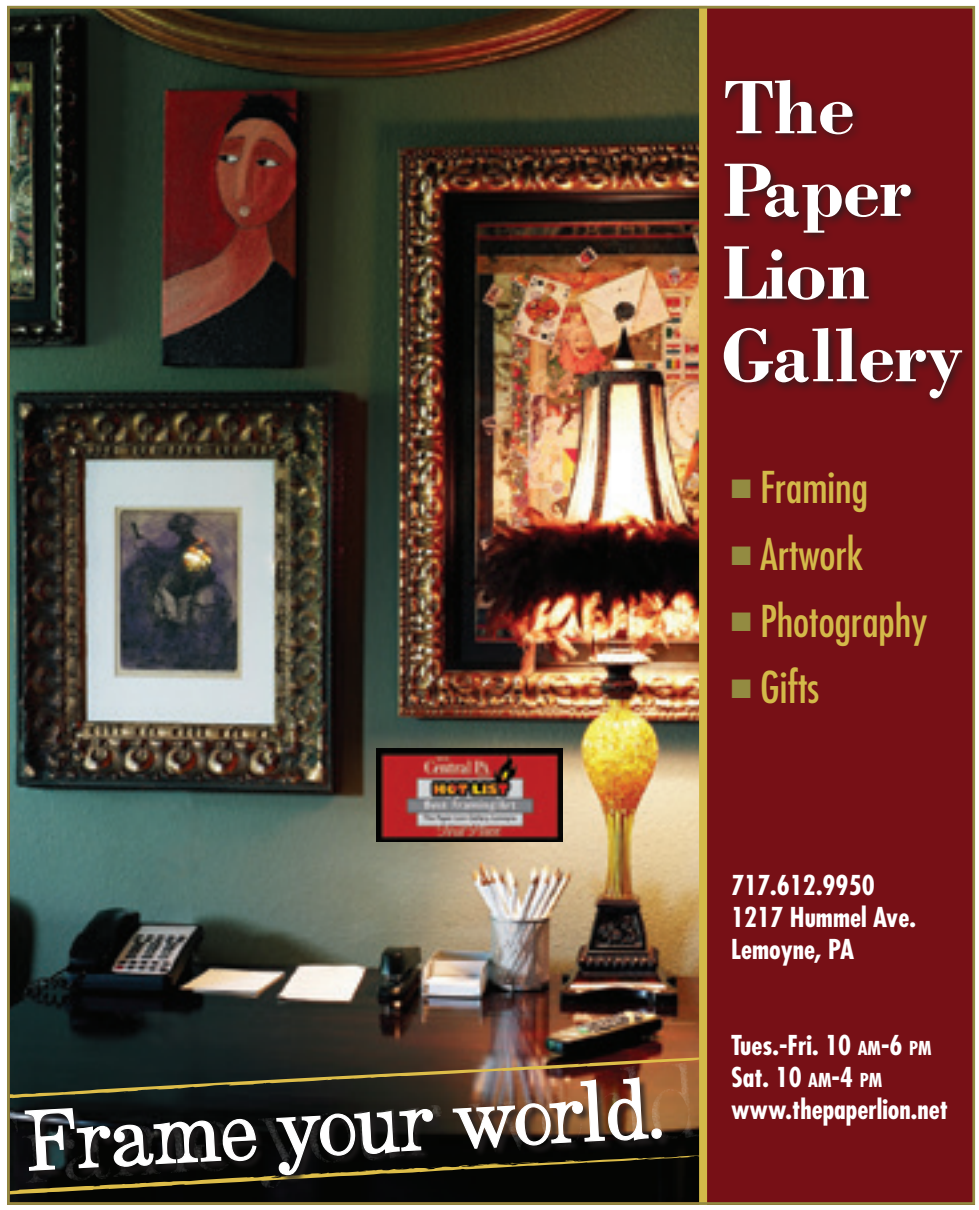
"This story may be an extreme example, it may be hyperbole, but things that happen in 1984 have happened," Luttermoser explained. "It's frightening to constrain people's freedom to exist, to think, to love, to work. And it's happened. It's still happening. I don't think this story is necessarily a warning or a prophecy, I think in some ways, it's a mirror."

Luttermoser has cast eight live actors in 1984 and three who will be present only by voiceover. All live actors will be present on stage for the entire production, which Luttermoser feels reflects the constant surveillance that Winston and everyone in Oceania experiences.

"The whole cast will be on stage watching, and the audience will be watching them," he said. "It adds layers of being watched."

The cast includes Sean Adams as Winston Smith, Alexis Campbell as Julia, Ed Webb and O'Brien, Amber Mann as Parsons/Guard, David Richwine as Syme/Guard, Lisa Leone Dickerson as Landlady/Guard, Hannah Edwards as Gladys/Messenger/Guard, Brennen Dickerson as Martin/Guard, J. Clark Nicholson as the voice of Big Brother, Charles Hooker as the voice of Goldstein and David Ramon Zayas as the voice on the Loudspeaker.





Legendary Lypsinka Talks

By Frank Pizzoli

John Epperson's legendary Lypsinka returned to the New York stage last month. The character is his lip-synching drag alter ego, Lypsinka, brought to the stage *Lypsinka! The Trilogy* consisting of three different productions - two revivals: *Lypsinka! The Boxed Set*, a revue featuring excerpts from films and musical recordings, and *The Passion of the Crawford*, a recreation of a 1973 Joan Crawford interview, as well *John Epperson: Show Trash*, an autobiographical setting with Epperson playing piano, singing, and dishing about his early years in Mississippi. *Central Voice* caught up with Lypsinka in NYC in his fav restaurant.

Central Voice: What brings you back after almost a decade away from the stage?

Lypsinka: I haven't been totally away. I've performed the *Passion of the Crawford* three times in San Francisco in the past decade. I joke that anyone could do a show about Joan Crawford in San Francisco and it'll be a hit! But I haven't done a run of a show in New York for nine years.

CV: Everything coming together?

L: I'd been waiting for all the pieces to fall into place - the right theater, right publicist, money, and the right time. I would have done it earlier if all of that had fallen into place. The person who's really making it happen is an angel that I found in Paris. He's helping to fund the revival so I have him to thank.

CV: In the nine years since you've been on a New York stage, assimilation primarily through marriage and open service in the Armed Forces is reshaping parts of the LGBT community. Will no longer being "different" change our creativity?

L: Would Tennessee Williams have written *Streetcar Named Desire* or *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* or *The Glass Menagerie* today? Would Tchaikovsky have written all that gorgeous music if he felt like he belonged? That's why assimilation worries me. Is it going to be the end of culture, of art and creating?

CV: I've asked iconic gay writer Edmund White what if people like E. M. Forster, Williams, others, had been out, would they have created differently? He has said, paraphrasing, they may have produced more, not necessarily differently.

L: Maybe, perhaps Williams had other demons chasing him, not just his sexuality. We won't really know until this assimilation is complete and a whole generation has gone through it. Kids often rebel against their parents. Think about all the gay people who have kids. I'm curious to see how their kids will manifest their rebellion.

CV: Say more...

L: Since they're being raised in very liberal households open about sexual attitudes, their rebellion may not be about sexuality. And just because their parents are gay doesn't mean they are or will be.

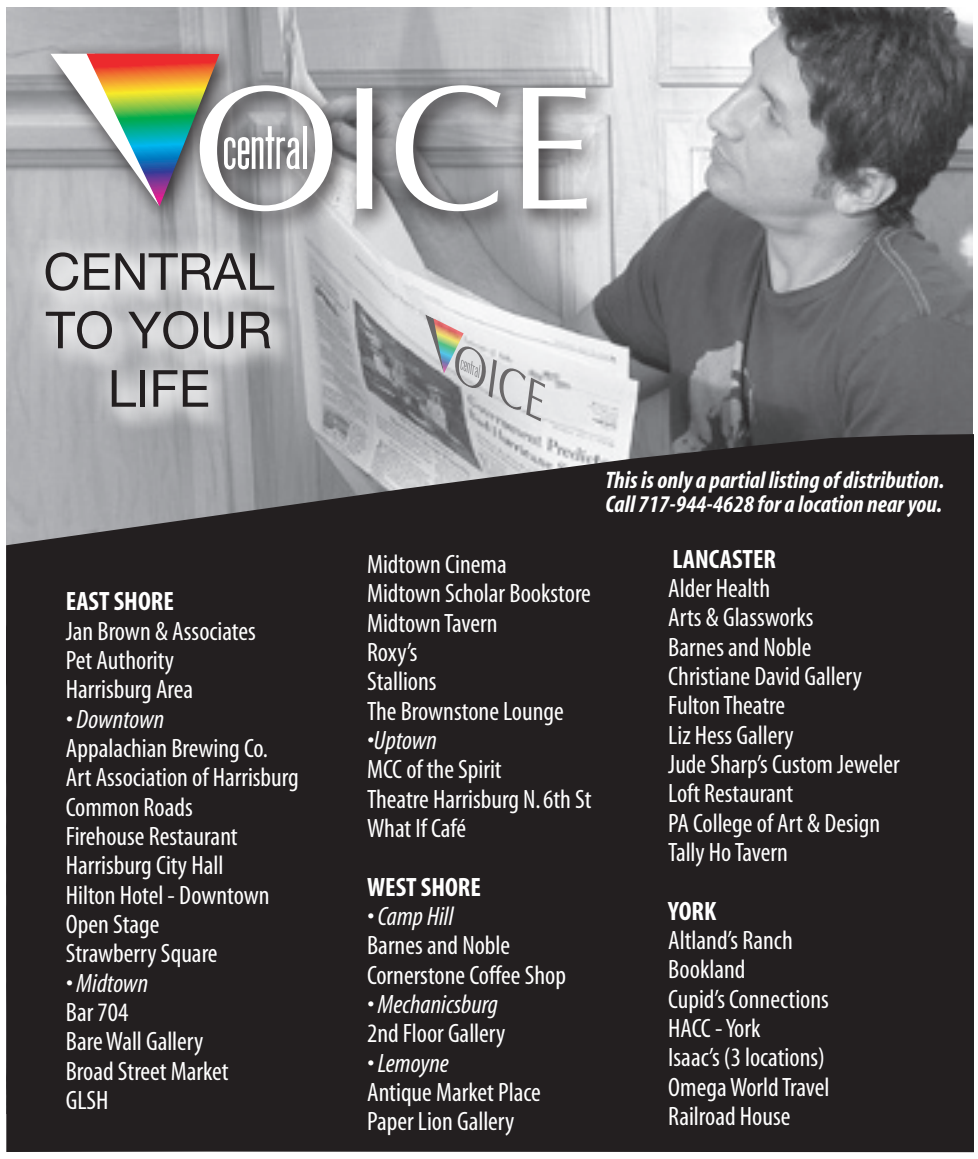
CV: Speaking of rebellion, we are at war with words again, from Ru Paul to Facebook. I used the term "camp" and you said, "Oh, I hope not."

L: I think "camp" is a very limiting perception now. Maybe it was liberating in '64 >

Wissler-Thomas, Barton, Sign Book

By Central Voice

Dec. 5 Carrie Wissler-Thomas and Dr. Michael Barton signed copies of their book *As the Paint Dries* at the Art Association of Harrisburg. Published by Sunbury Press, the book is a history of the Art Association, a factual accounting of the story of the region's most venerable fine arts organization. "I also included many of my amusing personal reminiscences," says Wissler-Thomas. The Art Association was founded by cultured civic leaders who were passionate about the visual arts. The history of association in many ways mirrors the history of Harrisburg, reflecting the vicissitudes of the city's economy and development, the Renaissance of the 1980s and '90s, the construction of the Hilton and other prominent downtown buildings, the re-development of Reservoir Park, and the emergence of Restaurant Row. The association was founded during the heyday of The City Beautiful Movement, and like The Harrisburg Symphony and Theatre Harrisburg, the organization continues to provide cultural enjoyment and opportunities for art-lovers and practitioners of all ilks.



(far left) Lypsinka as Bette Davis
(center) Lypsinka (John Epperson)
(above) Lypsinka as "Leatice"

when Susan Sontag wrote her essay (Notes on "Camp"). Now it's an overused word people use in a dismissive way just as the word "drag queen" can also be dismissive. "Drag queen" is a term that dumbs things down to say they're "campy." On the other hand, the whole world is dumbed down, so maybe I should say my revival is "campy" and I'd sell more tickets!

CV: If we think something is "camp," then we needn't look any deeper than what's being presented visually?

L: It's just surface, shallow. I've always aimed for something bigger than that. Whether that's a mistake of mine or not, I don't know. A show needs to be about something. Even something like Broadway's *Cinderella*. I imagine Douglas Carter asking himself What is this about? instead of just telling the story again. What's deeper than the Cinderella myth on the surface is very powerful.

CV: Like what is beneath drag performance can be deeper, beyond the visual fluff you or Ru Paul, who has performed in our region, or any performer presents?

L: Yes. This will sound hoity-toity, and I don't mean for it to, but people have tried to peg me as a "performance artist" or a "drag queen" or "drag performer" or whatever, but I've finally come to accept that what I am is a surrealist. Now that could be distancing to lots of people, and that's an overused word too. There was even a reality show called *The Surreal Life*. In fact, I wanted to call *Show Trash* something else, *The Sad and Lonely Half World of the Sissy Surrealist* and we decided the shorter name was more succinct. Still, I'm going to tell the audience that we thought of that name and we should get a laugh.

CV: You gave people occasion to think about real versus surreal afterwards?

L: Hopefully they will think, oh, there's something more than we thought. Just like I didn't want to go see Michael Urie do a show (*Buyer & Cellar*) about Barbra Streisand, lip-synching in a dress. That sounds awful. I imagine people thinking that, like I did. Then after seeing him, as I did, they realize, oh, my God, there was so much more that was unexpected, they had pre-conceived notions just as I had.

CV: Facebook has decided that female impersonators, drag queens, people who do not use their real names, cannot have a Facebook membership under performance names. Have you had any trouble? (See Gay Exodus from Facebook? on page 21.)

L: You'd have to ask Facebook why they haven't given me a hard time, but I wondered if maybe it's because my own longevity outside of Facebook using the name Lypsinka, created 32 years ago. Ima Hogg could have been created last year. It could also have something to do with the fact that my Facebook page is very popular and they probably know that. I also have a Lypsinka fan page there. I get many requests from people who want to be my friend, many of them drag queens with wacky names and there have been so many lately. I thought maybe the popularity of *RuPaul's Drag Race* has made so many gay guys think, "Oh, I want to create a drag character for myself too" and they create online identities. Facebook probably thinks it's too much, too many.

CV: You're performing a trilogy, one of three shows on different nights in the same run. Too many? How do you prepare?

L: I wish I could meditate but my brain is always spinning so I'm lucky to sleep. I'm doing good if I can get some sleep. I exercise constantly, did my cardio and other exercises this morning with more to do before the day is out. I exercise my singing daily. I'm going to a singing lesson from here.

British Invasion Feb. 14 at Art Association

The Beatles took the country by storm as they started the British Invasion. Peace and Love signs dotted the landscape, and love beads, headbands and tie-dye dominated the fashion scene.

If you don't remember the '60s, that's okay, you can experience the decade at The Art Association of Harrisburg's 2015 Bal Masque, Feb. 14, 6-11 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel in Camp Hill, a new location for the popular event. Serving as Honorary Chairs are Robert and Amy Hall of The Hall Foundation, which was the 2014 Recipient of the Harrisburg Distinguished Service to the Arts Award. Event chairs are Kate Earley and Karen Shughart.

Presented by The Higher Information Group, LoveFest: A Happening will be a fun-filled evening guaranteed to please people of all ages. Attendees can dress in costume, casual, or party attire-anything goes-it's the freewheelin' '60s! Those in costume will be able to compete for a variety of prizes awarded by Bal judges.

Cost is $100 per person. All proceeds benefit the Art Association's programs and services. Registration: www.artassocofhbg.com, printed invitations or 717-236-1432.

RESERVATIONS MAY BE MADE AT WWW.ARTASSOCOFHBG.COM
TICKETS $100

A stamp printed in USSR shows Poster "Red Army as Liberator", Western Ukraine, series 50th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the USSR, circa 1968

Being lgbt in RUSSIA

A police officer detains a gay rights activist in Red Square in Moscow, Russia, Friday Feb. 7, 2014. Police quickly detained 10 LGBT activists in Moscow who waved rainbow flags on Red Square, according to Russian news reports.

This communiqué is about Gleb Latnik, is a gay Russian activist seeking asylum in the US. In early December, Human Rights First hosted it's annual summit at the Newseum in Washington, DC. Latnik was one of the summit's panelists.

By Gleb Latnik

I was born in a small town in the Ural region of Russia. I realized I was gay as a teen, but it took years for me to accept myself because of the lack of information about LGBT life in Russia. I even attempted a relationship with a woman.

When the Russian Parliament considered a law that would ban so-called "propaganda of homosexuality," I started seeking out information about LGBT life in Russia. After President Putin signed the bill, I was shocked and horrified by the climate of hate and violence against LGBT people that it encouraged. I realized that I couldn't stay silent anymore. I had to stand up for LGBT human rights. My resolve was sealed when last year on May 10th criminals murdered Vladislav Tornovoy in Volgograd simply for being gay.

Just two weeks later I arrived in Moscow to participate in a campaign against violence and discrimination against LGBT people. During this public event I was illegally detained.

Despite the detention, I continued organizing public events in my hometown and in nearby Yekaterinburg. These events were successful, but I couldn't find a single word about them in the local newspaper. Later I came to know that journalists and the media were "strongly advised" not to cover LGBT events.

I decided to hold a protest performance during a high profile event for LGBT human rights, the 2013 Innoprom International Exhibition. My preparations finally landed me on the Russian security forces radar.

My mother started calling me constantly, concerned about my safety. Strangers came to my apartment asking when I would arrive home. I knew they were members of the security forces, although they never showed identification badges nor left any subpoenas. I decided not to return home until the beginning of the Innoprom Exhibition.

Right before it began, I was kidnapped at a cafe by Russian Security Forces on Extremism (FSB-Centre E). My capture was in violation of the law, as they didn't show me any identification during the eight hours I was held against my will. The purpose of my abduction was clear: they were trying to frighten me out of any public events during the exhibition.

Even so, I remained undeterred and proceeded as planned. My partners in the protest, however, backed out and I was forced to adapt. My performance became a one-man show.

After the protest, life for me in my hometown became very dangerous. I was lucky to avoid several attempted assaults, but my luck couldn't hold forever and I was eventually attacked. Concerned for my welfare, a LGBT activist named Alexei Davydov offered me a safe place stay in Moscow. I immediately moved.

I found it very difficult to find and keep a job in Moscow, because employers monitor people's private lives via the Internet. I was considered a problem employee because of my involvement in protests, so they would fire me. I went from job to job.

I was arrested at my last protest activity in Russia. Along with several activists, I planned to sing the national anthem of the Russia Federation in Red Square during the Opening Ceremonies of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games. We were inspired by Swedish LGBT activists who flew pride flags and sang the Russian national anthem to show their solidarity with the Russian LGBT community.

Before the protest, my fellow activists and I gathered at a café in the Red Square. Russian Police began gathering outside the café and we realized we were in danger. They knew what we were planning to carry out, as they bug phones, monitor text messages, and perform surveillance on social networks.

When we exited the café, we were arrested. After being detained at the police station for four hours, they handcuffed and kicked us. I was punched, beaten and grabbed by my hair. One of the activists was strangled. A Russian police officer spat in the face of one of my fellow activists, Elena Kostyuchenko. One of the officers said, "We will burn you all." We never saw a badge. The police officers confiscated our phones and combed through all our information. Despite multiple requests we were not allowed to meet with the Public Defender.

In the arrest record, the police wrote that we had "sang a song to the tune of the anthem of the Russian Federation with different words." This was not true. My fellow protest activists and I sang the anthem word for word.

After this incident, I was convinced that not only did the Russian Federation have no legal protection for me as a citizen of the country but also my life was in imminent danger from the security forces, police, and anti-gay criminals.

At that point, I realized I must leave Russia and seek political asylum in the United States.

My story is not unique—there are many like me who are still in Russia experiencing the same isolation, harassment, and illegal detention. Putin's widespread admiration and the popularity of his anti-gay agenda mean that LGBT activists like me have few allies at home. And Russia's neighbors are following his example, introducing anti-propaganda legislation that targets already vulnerable LGBT communities within their own borders. Homophobia is spreading.

When Coming Out Is a **Death Sentence**

Iraqi human rights groups are calling on foreign embassies, relief organizations, donor countries and others to:

> *Push Iraqi government to lift prohibitions on civil society organizations operating shelters and increase resettlement spaces for LGBT individuals.*
> *Expedite appeals for LGBT individuals who want to leave the country.*
> *Monitor reports of ongoing violence against LGBT Iraqis with the goal of urgently expanding protections.*
> *Hold militias accountable for harassment and abuse of individuals because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.*

< A leaflet distributed by the Asaib Ahl Al-haq militia shows a list of "sodomites". The leaflet is from June 2014 when the photo was taken in Sadr-city, Baghdad.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

increase in violence against gay people had become public.

Hossein's comments come after release of two new publications by IGLHRC, MADRE, an international women's human rights organization, and the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI): *When Coming Out Is a Death Sentence* and *We're Here: Iraqi LGBT People's Accounts of Violence and Rights Abuses*.

The 18-page "When Coming Out" report documents violence and serious human rights abuses against LGBT individuals perpetrated by relatives, tribal factions and by Islamist militias and vigilantes. The research was conducted from July to September, including interviews with 25 individuals.

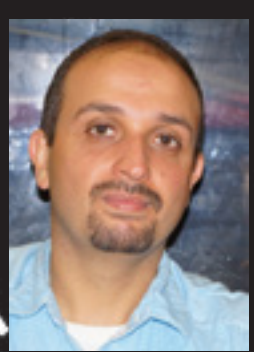
The collapse of the rule-of-law in central Iraq, as Hossein points out, and the rise of IS has ignited violence by sectarian militias against individuals seen as transgressing social norms. In June, for example, two adolescent boys thought to be gay were killed and beheaded in Baghdad - their heads tossed in the garbage. The report concludes that LGBT Iraqis are among the least protected groups in terms of the escalating threats to their safety.

"LGBT Iraqis are in a desperate situation that demands action," said Jessica Stern, executive director of IGLHRC. "Many Iraqis face violence and serious human rights abuses but LGBT Iraqis, reviled across large segments of society, have none of the protection that can come from families, tribes and the community-at-large. Now, many LGBT Iraqis literally must hide to protect themselves. Exposure can mean death in the chaos of present-day Iraq."

The 12-page report, *We're Here: Iraqi LGBT People's Accounts of Violence and Rights Abuses*, relates the suffering and harrowing experiences of five LGBT individuals—three gay men, a lesbian woman and a transgender woman —immediately before the current crisis in Iraq set in.

The report highlights the long-standing exclusion, discrimination and violence against LGBT individuals in Iraq and describes the individuals' daily struggles to survive and overcome violence and abuse. In one horrific example, a lesbian identified by the pseudonym Leyla described her girlfriend's killing by her family after their relationship became known. Leyla said she personally was later kidnapped and tortured by a militia, and she witnessed the slaughter of a gay man detained with her. None of the perpetrators of this violence have been brought to justice.

"The stories of LGBT people in Iraq are a painful reminder of the rampant abuse and violence that these individuals face because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. No human being should suffer inhumane treatment because of who they are," Hossein said.



Hossein Alizadeh is a US citizen originally from Iran

Other Countries Troublesome for LGBT Individuals

>GAMBIA

Gambia President Yahya Jammeh Oct. 9 signed a bill calling for life imprisonment for some homosexual acts, the latest African country to codify harsh penalties for gay people. Jammeh, one of Africa's most outspoken anti-gay leaders, instructed gay and lesbian people in 2008 to leave the country or risk decapitation.

The Gambian law criminalizes "aggravated homosexuality", and targets "serial offenders" and people living with HIV or Aids. Suspects can be charged with aggravated homosexuality for engaging in homosexual acts with someone who is under 18, disabled or who has been drugged. The term also applies when the suspect is the parent or guardian of the other person, or is "in authority over" him or her.

Amnesty International has documented that at least eight people have been arrested on allegations of homosexuality since early November, including one 17-year-old boy. But three people who fled to neighboring Senegal after the arrests began told BuzzFeed News that they have had reports from friends that put the number of arrests as high as 13.

"If ever they find us, they're going to kill us," a 20-year-old lesbian who escaped to Senegal said in a phone interview. She asked to be identified as "Theresa" in order to keep her real name secret because she fears Gambian officials will come after her even outside the country. In May, Jammeh vowed in cases of LGBT refugees fleeing the country, "If I catch them, I will kill them."

>JAMAICA

LGBT Jamaicans are vulnerable to both physical and sexual violence and many live in constant fear, Human Rights Watch has reported. They are taunted, threatened, fired from their jobs, thrown out of their homes, or worse: beaten, stoned, raped, or killed.

Human Rights Watch found that police investigations are often inadequate or lacking altogether, in some cases due to homophobia within the police force. Discriminatory laws contribute to the specific vulnerability of LGBT people. The Jamaican government should, the report recommends, strike down antiquated "buggery laws" – which outlaw anal sex and all male homosexual conduct – and take measures to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Jamaicans from discrimination and violence.

"LGBT people in Jamaica face intolerable levels of violence and cannot rely on the police," said Graeme Reid, LGBT rights director at Human Rights Watch.

John Becker and husband Michael posted this photo online.

A Kiss Is Just a Kiss ...or Is It?

By Central Voice

John Becker and husband Michael have learned that sometimes a kiss is more than a kiss.

It started with Michael Sam when he kissed his boyfriend after selection to the TEAM.

From "Way to go!" to "Why do they have to show us?" reactions were all over the place.

The Heterosexual Dictatorship, or should we say those opposed to same-sex anything - or maybe *anything* sexual - made their point.

Then the controversy continued more recently when *After 19 Kids and Counting* star Jessa Duggar shared an Instagram photo of herself locking lips with husband Ben Seewald. She apparently got some criticism from people who thought her PDA was inappropriate. In response, Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar took their own kissing pic, which they then posted to the family's "official" Facebook page along with a call to action.

Fans quickly responded with photos of themselves and their spouses smooching for the camera. According to Becker, however, some of those photos were deleted — because they featured same-sex couples. Becker, who runs the LGBTQ blog *The Bilerico Project*, wrote that the picture he posted of himself and his husband was deleted from the comments section, along with other shots of same-sex twosomes. On same-sex-kiss objector wrote: "God designed marriage to be a loving, dynamic relationship between a husband and wife for a lifetime," the accompanying caption read. "God loves marriage and it is supposed to be full of love, joy, fun, and romance. Marriage is where romance belongs!"

In the meantime, *Central Voice* went to the source to ask Becker about the stir he helped to cause.

Central Voice: You and your husband Michael are in the middleof all this?

John Becker: Oh no, I think I've been banned from the Duggar Family Official Facebook page! (I'm crying into my coffee cup right now, I assure you)," Becker shared on his own Facebook page, and on *The Bilerico Project*. "I posted this photo of Michael and me with the following comment: 'Happily married for nearly nine years; working hard for #MarriageEquality for all loving couples.'"

CV: When people object to gay men showing affection in public, I feel like they're calling the us "uppity faggots". Your thoughts?

JB: For me, I don't feel like they're calling us "uppity faggots," so much as revealing their own internal (and sometimes unconscious) homophobia, and showing that they're not nearly as "tolerant" or "accepting" of LGBT people as they may think they are.

Most straight people wouldn't think twice about putting an arm around their significant other, holding that person's hand, or giving them a hug or a kiss in public... yet when it comes to LGBT people, we're expected to "get a room" and keep our love in the closet. I say hell no, I will not accommodate your bigotry. I'm not going to feel any more inhibited about expressing my love for my husband in public than any straight person would be.

CV: Is it time for state governments to remind religious organizations that they perform marriage ceremonies with permission granted to them by the state? That for some couples, a religious ceremony is a skipped or second step?

JB: I think everyone needs to be reminded of this. To be honest, though, I have a real problem with the state granting that permission at all. I don't think there should be any overlap between religious and civil marriage ceremonies. I think marriage should be like it is in Europe, where couples can do whatever religious ritual they want, but the marriage isn't legal unless and until they go down to city hall and fill out and sign a marriage license in the presence of a secular agent of the state.

CV: Is it time for the state and Federal governments to get out of the marriage business and let those arrangements to contract law? Religious organizations and those who follow them can do whatever they want.

JB: No, absolutely not. I reject that completely. This argument falsely conflates civil and religious marriage. The truth is that no religious leader or faith tradition in the United States has ever - ever - been forced to marry any couple in violation of their religious beliefs. Also, let's not forget that marriage hasn't always been a concern of religion - in fact, many religious traditions actively stayed out of the marriage business until relatively recently in their history.

Under our current legal system, there is no way of securing all the 1,138 federal rights (and hundreds of other state-level rights) of marriage through contracts or any other alternate arrangements.

Furthermore, marriage is about far more than just rights and benefits. The word marriage conveys love, family, and lifetime commitment in a way that no other word or phrase does. It's universal. Ask any married person whether they'd be willing to exchange their marriage for a "civil union" or a "domestic partnership" or some other sterile-sounding alternative arrangement, and I'm willing to bet that 99 times out of 100 you'll get a resounding "no." I can't imagine anything more disgustingly ugly and homophobic than abolishing civil marriage rather than allow same-sex couples to enter into it.

The point is, government is in the marriage business and will remain so for the foreseeable future (and in my view, that's a good thing). Because of our Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the law, government must treat all couples equally in marriage law and stop unconstitutionally discriminating against same-sex couples.

Wherever one stands on the issue, here's some points same-sex kiss objectors missed:

1. If a same sex kiss offends you, don't kiss the same sex.

2. If you think homosexuality or lesbianism is wrong, then don't be a homosexual or lesbian. It doesn't sound like a good idea for you.

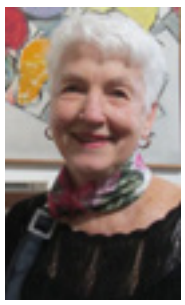
3. Try to remember in that narcissistic mind of yours that you don't get to decide the sexuality of every adult on the planet. Only your own. If this challenges you, ask a therapist to define narcissism. It may help you put your bloated self into perspective.

New Appointments:

• Janson Wu New GLAD Executive Director

Janson Wu, Deputy Director and Senior Staff Attorney for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), has been appointed the organization's new executive director. In addition to litigation experience, Wu has been extensively involved in GLAD's legislative and policy work throughout New England. In New Hampshire and Rhode Island, he led GLAD's coalition work with local advocacy organizations, legislators and individuals to pass marriage equality, for example. During the past year, Wu has served as GLAD's Deputy Director, playing an essential role on the leadership team following former executive director Lee Swislow's retirement. Wu lives with his husband in Boston.

• PFLAG Announces New President



PFLAG National, a national organization of parents, families, and allies united with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people (LGBTQ)—have appointed Jean Hodges, Boulder, Colorado, as its new board president. Hodges is a longtime member of PFLAG, having co-founded the Boulder chapter, and served as its President. She rose through the ranks, serving as a regional director and then as the chairperson of the 13-member Regional Directors Council. In that capacity, she also served as the Vice President of the National Board of Directors.

Google App: Shoot the Gays Game Taken Down

A game known as 'Ass Hunter' allowed players to shoot naked gay men as they try to molest the player. The game was taken down by Nov. 24, 2014. A petition by Brad Delaney garnered 340 signatures. As each signature was entered into the petition, the platform used by Delaney had the press department notify Google in real time.

Ass Hunter has been playable online since 2006 but was uploaded to the Google Play app store on Nov. 23, 2014. The game description reads, 'Legendary game, where you are hunter and your mission is to kill gays as much as you can or escape between them to the next level. Gays may be hidden in bushes and unexpectedly catch you. 'Remember! When they catch you they will do with you whatever they want.'

Google removed a game that asked users to kill gay people to survive today, after a public outcry, but not before the game had been available for weeks and downloaded thousands of times. Ass Hunter had been downloaded over 10,000 times and had received 200 five star reviews before it was pulled, and is still available across the internet.

In the game, players control a hunter with a shotgun who must kill naked men before they approach him. If they are able to reach him then the game shows a cartoon depiction of the men having sex with the hunter. Game text said "Popular game hunting on gays is now on android! "Play and do not be gay!"

Gay Star News reader Michael Boudreau said he and several of his friends had already complained to Google about the game. "In this day and age, it's hard to see a game designed with the sole intent of quite literally targeting LGBT individuals," Michael Boudreau said. Toronto-based writer, Travis Myers, told GSN that he found the presence of Ass Hunter on the Google Play store "abhorrent." 'While it is just an app there is absolutely no ambiguity about the homophobic intent of this game — this is a game for people who fantasize about killing gay people,' he said.

Google has affirmed its status as an LGBTQ ally many times in the past, Myers said, but I think the fact that this game was uploaded and available on their App Store means they can and should do better to support gay rights, especially in light of recent high profile cases of homophobic violence around the world."

Gay Exodus from Facebook to Ello?

With the recent brouhaha over using real names media reports suggest a gay exodus from Facebook. A real name policy affects drag queens who rely on forged names as their online identity.

Meanwhile, Ello, a social network where real names are not required, is getting a boost after Facebook booted drag queens. *The Washington Post* reported Ello founder Paul Budnitz told Betabeat the Web site, which rolled out in July, he is getting 4,000 new signups per hour. That could not be independently verified said The Post.

Ello's manifesto declares that users are not "products" and promises not to track and record "every post you share, every friend you make and every link you follow" and then sell the data to advertisers.

Meanwhile, "The great gay Facebook exodus begins," the Daily Dot declared.

"We had a good discussion with the group about their perspectives on our real name standard, and we stressed how the standard helps prevent bad behavior, while creating a safer and more accountable environment," Facebook spokesman Andrew Souvall said in the statement to Buzzfeed.

Where will you be online for 2105?

November/December 2014 issue of Central Voice focusing on bisexuals

New Report Presents Challenges Facing Bisexuals

Last issue (Nov-Dec 2014), *Central Voice* focused on an often overlooked, and sometimes despised, segment of the LGBT community in "Bisexuality: An Invisible Majority?"

Now, a new report "Understanding Issues Facing Bisexual Americans" by the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), BiNet USA and the Bisexuality Resource Center claims that bisexuals face disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, violent victimization and negative health outcomes.

According to the report:

* Approximately 25% of bisexual men and 30% of bisexual women live in poverty

* 20% of bisexuals report experiencing a negative employment decision based on their sexuality, and 60% of bisexual people report hearing anti-bisexual jokes at work

* 46% of bisexual women have experienced rape, compared to 13% of lesbians and 17% of straight women

* 61% of bisexual women have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner, compared to 43% of lesbians and 35% of straight women

* 47% of bisexual men report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime

* Bisexuals experience higher rates of hypertension, poor or fair physical health, smoking, and risky drinking than heterosexuals, lesbians, or gay men.

* Bisexual people are less likely than gay men or lesbians to be out to their health care providers.

The report calls for improved cultural competence among service providers around LGBT identities, including an increased understanding of the unique experiences of bisexual individuals. Additionally, the report calls on service agencies to collect data on sexual orientation, as this will provide better information on the social and health disparities that affect people of different sexual orientations and gender identities.

Info: www.lgbtmap.org/understanding-issues-facing-bisexual-americans

legal column

By Leo L. Dunn, Attorney at Law

What is a Public Accommodation?

It depends on what service is being provided...

Public accommodation does not have a simple definition. Most people think of it as an entity that offers services to the general public. Two types of such entities are businesses or government offices. However, neither one is necessarily considered a public accommodation according to law. It depends on what service is being provided, who is providing the service, and where the entity is located. It also depends on what law is being invoked and why.

Public accommodation is often thought of in regards to federal anti-discrimination and disability law. Title II of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it illegal for a place of public accommodation to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or religion. 42 U.S.C. § 2000a(a). Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it illegal for a place of public accommodation to discriminate against disabled persons. 42 U.S.C.§ 12182(a).

Private clubs and other establishments that do not hold themselves out as being open to the general public are not public accommodations unless they engage offering services outside of their memberships. Generally, privately-owned businesses and facilities that offer goods or services to the public such as food, lodging, gasoline, and entertainment are considered public accommodations for purposes of federal law. However, the Civil Rights Act and ADA do not use the same definition (the ADA is more inclusive). States and localities often have definitions that are more inclusive than the definitions under federal law. Thus, it matters how the exact law at issue defines the scope of coverage available. There is no one size fits all answer.

Under federal law it is not illegal for a place of public accommodation to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or on the basis of age, but some state and localities make it illegal. For example, a soccer group that wants to only have children on the team does not violate federal law. Nor would it violate federal law for an adult volleyball league to bar children or gay adults.

In Pennsylvania it is not illegal for a public accommodation to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation unless the entity and activity in question is located within one of the municipalities having an anti-discrimination ordinance that specifically states that sexual orientation is protected. Thus, neighboring businesses on either side of a township border may be held to different standards.

Leo Dunn is an attorney and counselor-at-law practicing in the Harrisburg area with a focus on the estate planning needs of the GLBT community. He may be reached at leo@leodunnlaw.com.

Medical Practice Denies HIV Treatment *cont'd*

has five offices in Lancaster County. He was seen by the practice in June, July and August 2013, but did not have his blood drawn.

On Oct. 4, 2013, Jones' blood was drawn for the first time during a routine visit to the practice's Quarryville office. Four days later, he returned to the office to discuss his results and was astonished to be given a letter from William R. Vollmar, M.D., dismissing him and his family as patients.

The letter claimed that at his last visit, Jones had "left a large amount of blood all over the sink, walls and floor" of the office's bathroom. The letter continued: "We feel since you are knowledgeable of your diagnosis that this behavior is inappropriate … this dismissal stands for all members of your family as well."

"This outrageous story is just a false pretext for denying care to a man because of his HIV status," said Ronda B. Goldfein, Esq., executive director of the AIDS Law Project and co-counsel on the case. "This fabrication depicts our client as a reckless person, but in fact he's a conscientious family man who sought out health care before moving to the area. It strains credulity that he would then do something like this."

"The law is clear: You can't refuse to treat a person simply because he or she has a disability — in this case, HIV," said Sarah R. Schalman-Bergen, an attorney at Berger & Montague and co-counsel in this case. "Also, these protections extend to anyone else associated with a disabled person, including their family."

"The AIDS epidemic is now in its fourth decade — and, sadly, this kind of discrimination still happens all too frequently, even in the health-care field," said Adrian M. Lowe, staff attorney at the AIDS Law Project and co-counsel on the case.

Among other things, the suit seeks that the Diamantoni practice develop an anti-discrimination policy and conduct training for all staff regarding HIV disease, transmission and universal precautions. It seeks awards for compensatory and punitive damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

The "Jones" family is represented by Ronda B. Goldfein and Adrian M. Lowe of the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania and Sarah R. Schalman-Bergen of Berger & Montague.

The complaint, titled Husband Jones and Wife Jones, on behalf of themselves and as Parents and Natural Guardians on behalf of Daughter Jones v. Stephen G. Diamantoni, M.D. & Associates Family Practice, Dr. Jeffrey T. Trost, and Dr. William R. Vollmar is filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. A copy of the complaint may be found at www.aidslawpa.org.

Founded in 1988, the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania is the nation's only independent public-interest law firm dedicated to AIDS and HIV.

Kaiser Foundation:

HIV/AIDS & Gay & Bisexual Men

The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that from the earliest days of the HIV epidemic, gay and bisexual men have been among the hardest-hit groups in the US. While gay men make up just 2% of the U.S. population, they account for two thirds (66%) of new HIV infections, a majority (56%) of people living with HIV, and more than half (55%) of all AIDS deaths since the epidemic's beginning. It is estimated that 12-13% of gay and bisexual men in the US are HIV-positive, including one in five in many major U.S. cities. Gay men are the only group in the country among whom new infections are on the rise; between 2008-2010, new infections rose 12% overall among gay men, and 22% among younger gay men ages 13-24.

Recent research shows that HIV medicines, which already have helped to dramatically increase the quality and length of life for people with HIV, has the potential to play a powerful role in the prevention of HIV. People living with HIV can reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to others by up to 96% if they are consistent with taking medications as prescribed, and for those who are HIV negative, new pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) offers a daily pill that can help them to stay negative.

What do gay and bisexual men know and think about HIV, and about these new treatments? What are the obstacles to this population taking greater advantage of them? To help answer these questions, the Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a survey of gay and bisexual men in the US focusing on attitudes, knowledge, and experiences with HIV/AIDS and new HIV therapies. The survey was conducted July 17-August 3, 2014 with a sample of 431 men who self-identified as either gay or bisexual using a nationally representative, probability-based Internet panel. Some highlights of the survey are presented here,

* Although HIV/AIDS is named as the number one health issue facing gay and bisexual men, a majority (56%) are not personally concerned about becoming infected, and relatively few report having been tested recently.

* Only 3 in 10 (30%) gay and bisexual men say they were tested for HIV within the last year, including 19% who report being tested within the last six months (these figures exclude the 10% who self-identify as HIV-positive).

* Gay and bisexual men under the age of 35 are twice as likely as those who are older to report never having been tested for HIV (44% vs. 21%). The CDC recommends at least annual HIV testing for this population with more frequent testing advised by many health departments.

* Only about a quarter (26%) know about PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), a daily pill that people who are HIV-negative can take to lower their risk of becoming infected. Eight in 10 (80%) say they have heard "only a little" or "nothing at all" about the new prevention option.

* Fewer than half (46%) of gay and bisexual men are aware that the current guidelines for people with HIV are to start antiretroviral (ARV) treatment as soon as they are diagnosed, and only a quarter (25%) know about treatment as prevention. (Research shows that taking consistent ARV treatment can reduce the risk of passing HIV on to others by as much as 96%.)

* More than half (56%) say that a doctor has never recommended they get tested for HIV, and six in 10 (61%) say they rarely or never discuss HIV when they visit their doctor.

Just a third (32%) realize that new infections are on the rise among gay and bisexual men. One in four (22%) think the number is decreasing and the rest either think the situation is staying the same or acknowledge that they don't know.

"These survey results underscore the importance of getting the word out among gay and bisexual men about risk and new treatment and prevention options," said Kaiser Family Foundation President and CEO Drew Altman, Ph.D.

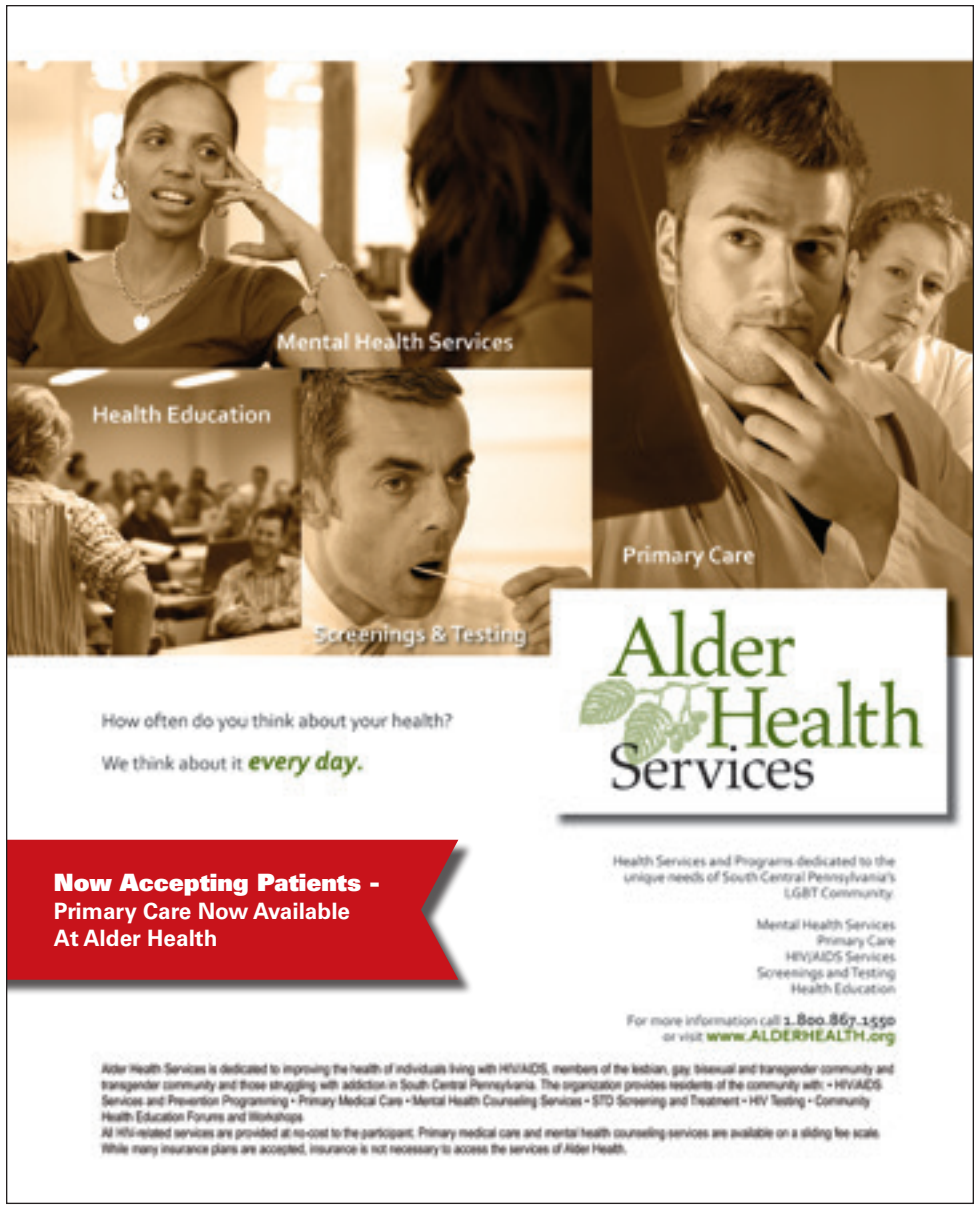
Read more at: http://kff.org

WORLD **AIDS** DAY

Alder Health Services & LGBT Center Partner

The World Health Organization established World AIDS Day in 1988. World AIDS Campaign is the leading international organization which plans and implements the observance annually on Dec. 1. Alder Health Services and the LGBT Center, 1306 N 3rd St., Harrisburg, partnered on Dec. 1 to bring World AIDS Day programming and services to the region. Services included free, rapid HIV testing and related information. Alder Health staff also provided HIV testing at the agency's Lancaster office, 1891 Santa Barbara Dr., Ste. 104. At LGBT Center, HIV/AIDS-related artifacts from the LGBT History Project were on display.

Sitting: Kim Snyder, Client Assistance Program Coordinator, and Cameron Schatz, Prevention Project Coordinator, both from Alder Health Services. Standing: Louie Marven, Executive director, LGBT Community Center; Candace Sillers, Director of Education and Wellness Services, Alder Health Services; and Pat Van Horn, Director of Operations, LGBT Center.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Primary Care
HIV/AIDS Services
Screenings and Testing
Health Education
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or visit www.ALDERHEALTH.org
Alder Health Services is dedicated to improving the health of individuals living with HIV/AIDS, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and transgender community and those struggling with addiction in South Central Pennsylvania. The organization provides residents of the community with: • HIV/AIDS Services and Prevention Programming • Primary Medical Care • Mental Health Counseling Services • STD Screening and Treatment • HIV Testing • Community Health Education Forums and Workshops
All HIV-related services are provided at no cost to the participant. Primary medical care and mental health counseling services are available on a sliding fee scale. While many insurance plans are accepted, insurance is not necessary to access the services of Alder Health.

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making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

Embracing Prosperity … And More!

Having you ever thought of embracing prosperity? Maybe not. Perhaps even the concept alludes you. Many people could care less about true prosperity, only wishing to win the lottery. Yep, as long as we have enough money everything will be just hunky dory! Right?

Hardly. When we talk about being prosperous we often think of money or possessions. For most people this outward display of societal status is what they equate with being prosperous. That outward display, however, can be experienced by each of us in very different ways, so no one show fits us all. And, in our culture, we don't even need money to fulfill those desires – we charge it! There is abundance all around us if we just stop to look for it. That does not include putting ourselves in debt and then expecting some Divine Being or dumb luck to show up with the needed cash to pay off our VISA® card.

The prosperity for which so many of us long is all around us. All we have to do is accept it! It is ours to receive just as abundantly as the air we breathe or the water in which fish swim. So how do we move from a consciousness of lack to a life in which we realize the abundance that is ours? We are required to believe with all our mind, heart and soul that we control the prosperity we seek. Additionally, we seek to exercise a prudent and responsible attitude with regard to money.

There is a power in the universe you can use

Like it or not, the abundance or apparent lack of prosperity we experience is a direct reflection of our consciousness. If we don't like the result we see then it's time to change our attitude and begin relying on the same principles that have been taught for thousands of years to affect change. The upgrades to our life may be gradual, but change will come as long as we are open and receptive to having natural, though little understood, laws work in our life in amazing ways.

When you read that our life situation is a result of our consciousness, our thinking, does that feel like we are to blame? We are not to blame and neither is anyone else, no matter how much we'd like to fault others. We are, however, responsible. How? We choose how we think and what we believe. That influences our circumstances. It was Eleanor Roosevelt who reminded us that no one can make us feel inferior without our consent. We have a choice in how we are going to act or react to situations and what we going to think or believe.

Does that sound like bunch of crap to you? Okay, I admit I felt that way at one time, but consider this: Are all people in wheelchairs helpless, unable to work and reliant upon welfare benefits or the kindness of strangers or family? No, of course not. One such person who comes to mind is Stephen Hawking. So what makes him different? He refused long ago to be identified by his circumstances.

Have you done the opposite of that in some part of your life? Did you decide at some point you could not go to college because no one else in your family has? Are you stopping yourself from pursuing your dream job because you're afraid your partner won't support you in doing so?

Why?

There is one sure way to make sure that you are always strapped for cash or living paycheck-to-paycheck. Do you know what that is? Tie yourself down to a job you hate. Live in an area you can't stand. Stay in an abusive relationship because you're afraid to be alone.

There is a power in the universe you can use – call it quantum energy, God, Divine Love or Fred for all I care. It's there and just waiting to be used by us for our good and the good of others. We can each start using it right now to change our thinking about life, stop making excuses for why we can't have what we want, and begin living a life that reflects prosperity and abundance in the form of financial success, healthy bodies, loving relationships, exciting careers and a growing experience our spirituality nature (or the awareness of how all of us on planet Earth are interconnected if spirituality isn't on your agenda).

Sound too easy? Trust me, it's not. It's simple, but not easy. I can guarantee you that the results are worth the effort. In the next day or two be willing to catch yourself making excuses, putting yourself down or allowing others to decide your future. Then, replace those thoughts and actions with one small, positive step toward the life you really want. We all have what it takes to change our thinking. What changes could you make to have the life you want?

Terry Drew Karanen is a Religious Science minister, licensed social worker, author and flight attendant. Read his weekly blog at Central Voice online or on his website at: terrydrewkaranen.com

ANALYSIS:

Rev. Frank Scheafer - "Story had to be told"

By Frank Pizzoli

"The story had to be told," said Rev. Frank Schaefer, referring to both an original play and his book about his struggles.

Central Voice talked to Rev. Frank Scheafer a few days before Lebanon Valley College's local Nov. 8 world premiere of "The Matter of Frank Schaefer," an original play produced by the Philadelphia-based Curio Theatre Company. The script delves into Schaefer's defrocking by the United Methodist Church for marrying his son to another man.

The play is especially important because the Methodist church's highest court, the Judicial Court, decided in late October to "refrock," him, a term Schaefer created that means he is once again a full fledge member of the United Methodist Church.

Schaefer

Originally, Schaefer was punished with a 30-day suspension for performing his son's wedding.

With the October 28, 2014 decision to not defrock him, the church Judicial Council determined that he could not be penalized further because he refused to refrain from performing any more same-sex marriage ceremonies. As the church drama unfolded, Schaefer made it clear he would not follow the church's Book of Discipline which does not allow for same-sex marriages - or the ordination of LGBT individuals. Although it not clear how the UMC, or any church, could enforce the ordination rule without first asking ordinants if they are gay. If anything, Schaefer may have been , still is, guilty of "premature morality," a phrase coined during the Viet Nam War years to describe those who were opposed to the war long before the nation moved to call an end to the conflict.

Schaefer won his re-admission into the church, some say, on a technicality.

"In one sense that's true. I was not defrocked because I married my son to another man. I was defrocked for not promising to never do it again," Schaefer explained. "My not promising meant I would not be following the church's rules," he said.

There is precedent for the church council's decision not to defrock Schaefer. "The Rev. Greg Dell, before my experience, was indefinitely suspended until he would agree to sign a statement to not perform same-sex marriages," Schaefer explained. Eventually, the church's high council decided it was acting unfairly and revoked Dell's suspension.

The judicial bodies that reviewed Schaeffer's defrocking/refrocking are review bodies within the UMC governance structure. Although the language of these review bodies resembles a governmental civil and/or criminal court, they are courts of the church not of the community-at-large. Unlike governmental courts, the rules of how to conduct a proceeding differ.

"We have not always seeing justice done with LGBT cases," Schaefer explains. "I was, for example, not allowed to call witnesses in my own behalf. I was not allowed to refer to sections of the church's Book of Discipline or prior decisions, like Rev. Dell, that disagreed with the original decision to defrock me," he pointed out.

Schaefer is now working in a student ministry on University of California's Santa Barbara's campus. He "will not back down" from speaking about equality for LGBT people in the UMC church, including marriage equality. "I will never be silent again," he said.

His refusal to be silent will have implications during the 2016 General Conference of the UMC.

"We have a very, very bitter disagreement over same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBT individuals," Schaefer says. "The writing is on the wall. Progressives within the church hope for a resolution. Actually, both sides are hoping for a resolution that seems unlikely," Schaefer says.

The depths of the conflict are explored in Schaefer's book Defrocked: How A Father's Act of Love Shook the United Methodist Church. Combined media attention to his story, an original play and his book all bring much needed attention to the role of religious organizations and the civil rights of LGBT people.

To say that organized religion is homophobic is an understatement. Pope Francis has called gay and lesbian families "bastardized." The Institute for Church Life at Notre Dame, a Catholic university, recently hosted a "Gay In Christ" conference

LGBT Welcoming Congregations:

MCC of the Spirit, Harrisburg
Unity of Harrisburg
Market Street Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg
Vision of Hope MCC, Mountsville
Temple Beth Shalom of Greater Harrisburg
Colonial Park UCC, Colonial Park
Grace United Church of Christ, location
St Michael Lutheran Church, Harrisburg
St Paul's United Church of Christ, location
Unitarian Church of Harrisburg
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of York UUC

MCC column

By Rev. Lori Rivera, Pastor
MCC of the Spirit

The "New"

I really like the word "new"! It has such a feeling of anticipation to it. A new "?". Whatever it is - a thing, a goal, a thought - it provides hope and excitement.

The "new" year gives us excitement for the future. What does the new year hold for us? Who will we meet in the new year? What will happen to us? Will we accomplish our goal(s)? Will we complete the tasks we have set before ourselves?

"New" is like looking through a window at an open field. Everything and anything is possible and becomes doable. Nothing obstructs our vision or our sight. The possibilities of "new" are endless.

As you look through the window of "new," what do you see? What dreams do you cast for yourself and/or your loved ones? What about "new" excites you or gives you feelings of anticipation?

As a Christian, I see "new" as a refreshing opportunity to walk with Christ. Each "new" day is an open window of opportunity to learn more about Christ, to serve Christ in some manner, and to share Christ with another. I've been a Christian for almost 50 years and every day I continue to learn something "new" about God. It's an exciting adventure. And it's the anticipation and excitement of the "new" that keeps me looking for God's movement in my life.

As we begin 2015, I invite you to look for the "new" in your life. The new might be found in your times of quiet reflection or in your times of community service. If your path is spiritual I invite you to come to MCC of the Spirit and walk anew with God. Come with anticipation and excitement that you will encounter God and know the "new".

Happy New Year!

Remembering Michael Brown of Ferguson

Lancaster Theological Seminary held a lit candles during a vigil held after the grand jury's decision not to indicted police officer Darren Wilson. The candles signified more than 1,000 people of color killed by law enforcement.

"Story had to be told" *cont'd*

that promoted gay celibacy as if expressing gay sexuality was wrong. Southern Baptist leaders have said gays are "abominations" controlled by Satan. A film screened in two locations locally, The New Black, closely examines the relationship of good 'ole time religion and the teaching of hatred toward gay people. Gay worshipers in these type of congregations hear sermons, prayers, and Sunday school classes devoted to the demonization and condemnation of LGBTQ individuals. They sit in pews watching friends and families accept these lessons in bigotry. Many remain in those pews when it is clearly time to leave, to find a church that wants you.

Still, there is hope. In some faith-based congregations, the Kingdom has come and the LGBT community is embraced. There are many welcoming religious congregations in the region. There policy of acceptance represents brave change.

"The church hierarchy is starting to realize this issue isn't going away," Schaefer says. He expects a "schism" to occur in the UMC over gay issues. He thinks there will be a separation of church progressives and more traditional church congregations into two separate groups. Each group will have its own Book of Discipline, one set of rules embracing same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBT people and one not inclusive. "Maybe after 2016, when we next come together in 2020, we will find a way to come back together."

For Frank Schaefer a compromise that brings the church back together should schism occur will not include the exclusion of LGBT individuals. "When I was in Lebanon, PA, a very conservative area, I had young families approach me and ask me about my stand on homosexuality. They wanted to know they were worshiping as a young family in a church that teaches equality for all," Schaefer concluded.

Come Back To Church

We know that many of you have been hurt by church in the past, but we're different. You're welcome here.

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ENCOUNTERING HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

What Can LGBT Students Do?

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) recently released its biennial study about the experience of LGBT students across the country. Locally a leader summit addresses issues faced by students.

Though the overall climate improved slightly in 2013 compared to the 2011 results, the study notes, LGBT students still largely feel unsafe, experiencing high rates of harassment and discrimination within the school system. As a result, their educational opportunities are measurably compromised.

In south central Pennsylvania "there are at least 30 area high schools with gay-straight alliance student groups in place," says Louie Marven, executive director of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania.

Empowerment works to lessen LGBT students feeling unsafe in school environments. Annually the center produces a conference experience called the GSA Leadership Summit. "We draw about 340 high school, college student, and staff participants for workshops on advocacy, making policy, and how to be more inclusive," he says. The 8th annual GSA Leadership Summit is Feb. 20-21 at Dickinson College. Harrisburg native Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality is keynote speaker.

Overall, schools can still be a particularly toxic environment for LGBT students; 55% say they feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and 38% say they feel unsafe because of their gender expression.

A number of different experiences contribute to this feeling of not being safe. Language alone has a huge impact, with 74% of LGBT students saying they've been verbally harassed (called names or threatened) for their sexual orientation, and 55% have been verbally harassed for their gender expression. Survey respondents described encountering the following language at school frequently or often:

"Gay" used in a negative way (71%), which makes 91% of them feel distressed.

Homophobic remarks, like "dyke" and "faggot" (64.5%).

Gender policing remarks, like being not "masculine enough" or "feminine enough" (56%).

Anti-transgender remarks like "tranny" and "he/she" (33%).

Teachers or staff using homophobic remarks (51%) or negative remarks about gender expression (55.5%).

The harassment is not limited to words, nor does it only happen at school. It frequently escalates to violence, like the following experiences:

Being physically harassed (pushed or shoved) because of their sexual orientation (36%) or gender expression (23%).

Being physically assaulted (punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation (16.5%) or gender expression (11%).

Being targeted for cyberbullying, harassment via text messages, Facebook, etc. (49%).

When students experience this kind of violence, 57% of them choose not to report the incident to school staff because they doubt anything will be done about it, or they worry it could make the situation even worse. Among those who did report the incidents, 62% said that school staff did nothing in response.

Students have a lot of other reasons to doubt effective school responses, though. The study found that 55.5% of LGBT students had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school, and 65% knew of other students who had. Those practices include the following:

Being disciplined for public displays of affection that non-LGBT students were not punished for (28%).

Being prevented from attending a dance or similar function with someone of the same gender (18%).

Being restricted from forming or promoting a gay-straight alliance (18%).

Being prevented from wearing clothing that supports LGBT issues (15%).

Among transgender students, 42% were prevented from using their preferred name, 59% were required to use a bathroom that did not match their gender identity, and 32% were prevented from wearing clothing appropriate to their gender identity.

The negative experiences LGBT students are not merely problems unto themselves. When students don't feel safe, it impacts their attendance and academic performance, consequences with implications for the rest of their lives. For example, LGBT students who experienced higher levels of victimization or discrimination reported the following:

They were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month.

They had lower grad point averages by as much as half a point.

They were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education.

They had higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem.

What's Working Well

Though the picture is still troubling, the outlook is not bleak, which is largely in part to increasing resources in schools. The study found that the positive benefits of these resources are easily identified and explain why anti-LGBT harassment is on the decline, however gradually.

Students Unsafe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

involving abuse or humiliation to initiate a person into a team or group. Currently, 44 states have some version of anti-hazing laws. Pennsylvania has such a law, which makes hazing a misdemeanor of the third degree, but it is limited to institutions of higher learning. Marsico's legislation would expand that law to make it applicable to public and private secondary schools, as well as to clarify that forcing a student to engage in conduct against his or her will is itself a form of hazing.

"The instances of hazing here in Pennsylvania, as well as across the country, clearly are not limited to colleges or universities," Marsico said.

Allegations have surfaced about football players at Central Bucks West High School where players had engaged in preseason hazing at the school that included a requirement that rookies grab another player's genitals while fully clothed. Allegedly another hazing incident involved placing towels over players' heads and leading them into the shower. Additionally, in New Jersey recently, multiple football team members at Sayreville War Memorial High School were charged with sexual assaults on younger players that took place as part of an initiation rite. In 2011, two high school basketball players at Andover High School in Massachusetts were expelled and five were suspended for pressuring underclassmen to play a game where the loser was forced to eat a semen-soaked cookie.

In a related story, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) recently released its biennial study about the experience of LGBT students across the country.

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Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons, Harrisburg Area Community College

"Can We All Get Along?"

Some of you, dear readers, made New Year's resolutions recently, and if you did, I wish you well. Studies have shown that perhaps 40 percent of you will be successful, so you do have a decent chance.

If you do some research on this practice of making resolutions—which dates back to the Romans at least—you'll find some amusing tidbits. My favorite is of Jonathan Swift's list in 1699, which includes "Not to be too free of advice, nor trouble any but those that desire it": a good one for columnists. And the last one of 17 is this: "Not to set up for observing all these Rules, for fear I should observe none."

I have a resolution to share with you in light of the recent events surrounding the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., by police officer Darren Wilson. I continue to think about this tragedy, and I want to show how it speaks to all of us of whatever race, class, gender or LGBTQ designation.

The national outcry after the Ferguson grand jury decided not to indict Wilson reminded me of the Rodney King beating verdict in Los Angeles in 1992. You may remember King's famous call: "Can we all get along?"

The rest of his statement is not as well known, but it should be. It includes this: "Please, we can get along here. We all can get along. I mean, we're all stuck here for a while. Let's try to work it out."

There are many interesting similarities between King's and Brown's stories, not the least of which is that eye-witnesses could not agree on what they had seen, nor could others who viewed the videotape. And in both cases, neither did the victims nor their families receive the justice they sought.

As we enter the New Year, and as we celebrate Black History Month, I think we are all indeed stuck here for a while, and we must indeed try to work it out. What I mean is that the work for social justice must go on.

Another King—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—told us that this work won't be easy and that we must be tireless in its pursuit. Which brings me to my New Year's resolution: to honor the memory of Dr. King and all those deaths of racial, ethnic and LGBTQ persons killed because of bias and prejudice.

I've got to say that I don't know what the answer is to social injustice. All kinds of thoughtful people have all kinds of good ideas, and we do make progress here and there. But what all this adds up to I'm not sure.

Can we all get along? Well, it's not that easy, is it. Many who were shocked by the violence against young black men over the past few years have made it seem as though this is a new phenomenon, but of course it isn't: The Rodney King beating occurred over 22 years ago. And please remember the beatings and killings of black men throughout American history—from slavery to lynchings to Emmett Till and so on.

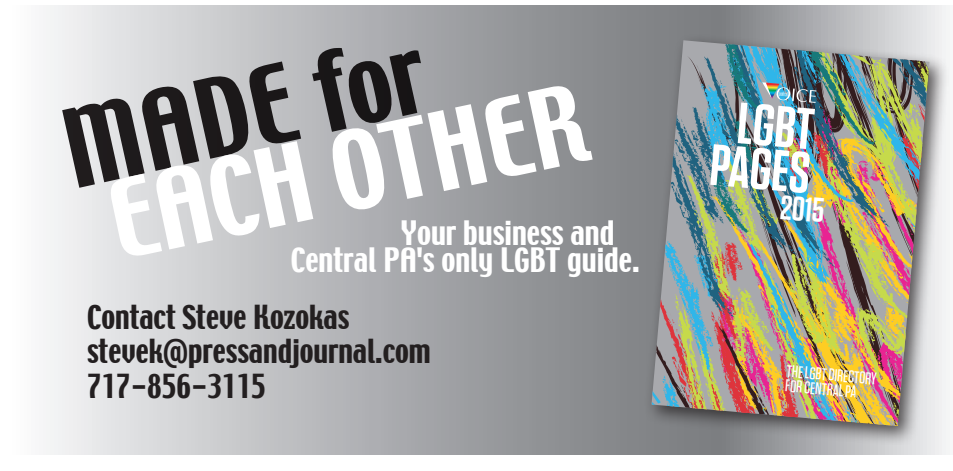
LGBTQ communities are quite aware of how far we still have to go in combating violence against us. Lately transgender individuals are gaining some recognition of their challenges, as well they should, but all minorities still walk in fear today.

I hope we can do better in our quest for social justice, and there are many of us who are doing our part. We need to continue to take the long view, although it has been said that, in the long view, we are all dead. And as I begin my seventh decade on this planet I am very aware of this fact.

The past couple of years at this time I have mentioned my granddaughter, Anya, who is now almost two and a half years old and who continues to be in the center of my life. Anya, like my grandnephew, is biracial, and these two children have come into a society that has changed much for the better in many ways.

Neither one of them will face the extent of prejudice my brother-in-law did when he was their age way back in the 1950s. This gives me hope, and it is a good way to end this first column of 2015.

Trum Simmons is professor emeritus of English and advisor emeritus to HACC Allies.



What You Missed

at FAB 2014

This poem was delivered at FAB 2014 by Shaashawn "The Voyce" Dial-Snowden, who served as MC. From the floor of the event that night, Nov. 15, readers asked if *Central Voice* would reprint her powerful words.

Tonight we sit,
post past hors d'oeuvres,
inked bids on silent auction items.
Mingling in shined shoes, sparkling sequence,
tailored suits, stockings, laced corsets.
Arched feet in heels complimenting patterned bow ties and skinny ties,
hidden spanx, binders, strapless bras,
buttoned vests, cuffed pants.
Sipping spirits from the cash bar before opened ballroom doors,
we are present,
grateful for abundant travel mercies that brought us to grace this space.
Blessed to have enough in bank accounts to purchase $100 or $125 seats.
Carrying intentions to enjoy food, celebrate honorees, and raise money for the LGBT Center of Central PA.
You are a dazzling ensemble of beautiful, handsome,
handsomely beautiful, beautifully handsome
self-identified LGBTQQIAAS-2 plus.
Yes, in this space we are inclusive and do not exclude any human being.
Letters of the alphabet willingly singled out and placed upon a pedestal
LGBT, GLBT, LGBTQIA, GLBTQQIA, SGL, no labels,
linking to celebrate a journey towards visibility, autonomy, authenticity and growth.

With the remaining hours of Saturday, November 15, 2014,
You, I, We are blessed to be Inhaling and exhaling,
celebrating harmony – the diverse ways we meet our need for connection and community.
You swiped credit card or spent cash to empower our communities.
Let's not forget there is more than one community assembled in this room.

The FAB committee has met and met and met.
Planned, coordinated, organized, delegated,
printed, counted, transported, cut, decorated, counted
crossed items off of cell phone tasks lists,
and printed too many copies to count on laser paper.
Months spent securing sponsors,
forwarding artwork via emailed ads,
proofing program booklets,
asking family, friends, and colleagues to support their efforts.

Tonight we celebrate all that has happened since November 2013 when we last assembled as FAB,
celebrating the right to BE.

Tonight we celebrate our ever changing branching diversity.
FAB reminds us that we are not the exact same branches extending from a singular tree.
We are not a monolithic people.
We celebrate the spine filled leaves aging with pride.
Telling their tales to the animals finding food and shelter under or on them.
These leaves are the connectors of oral histories and her-stories with the next generation of information collectors.

We rejoice in the blended bleeding colorful leaves of ethnicity.
In the words of Dr. Johnetta Cole speaking about our beloved Maya Angelou, "Dr. Maya deeply loved herself. She also taught us that in loving oneself you don't have to dislike others. She spoke against our insistence on making each other THE OTHER....She begged of us to treat each other with respect and ultimately with love."

We cheer the little leaves traveling common roads,
headed on streets of individual development in a collective safe space.

We delight in the leaves of nationality belongingness. Helping us see beyond our street, region, even country.
Love reaches across all borders.

We thank our leaves who refused to fall asleep,
protecting our ability to nap and sleep at home with their service abroad.

We recognize our leaves of color – often the living definition of intersections of race and socio-economic status.

We recognize the leaves that are aware that they blow in the winds of power and privilege.
Traveling north east or south west dependent upon how much rests in debt and bank accounts.

We marvel at the leaves in route from tree to ground; a journey of transition.

We say to each other tonight YOU …
I see YOU.
You lovely leaf…
Same sex/ same gender loving leaves dream bigger.
Lesbian leaves trust your instincts.
Gay leaves love inclusively.
Bisexual leaves educate internally and externally.
Trans* leaves shake off the self-doubt and know the Creator makes no mistakes.
Intersex leaves tell the world your stories.
Questioning leaves know you are not alone.
Queer leaves remain in awe of the splendor of the community.
Ally leaves thanks for standing with and behind us.
Two spirit leaves live bolder.
Share your love stories that are stored in the soul of the eyes like Marvin and David.
Tell your love stories of how friendship grew into more like Tamika and Jodilynn.
Release your contagious laughter, fun, and joy for and of life like Kevin and Fred.

We exult in the joining of leaves legally as of May 20, 2014.
Laid to rest are the out of pocket costs to overcome title of LEGAL STRANGER,
No more residents of the least friendly LGBTQI state in the North East, even though we still need to pass House Bill 300!

Do you see exquisite leaves that we are witnessing the "not likely" to happen…happen.
We are present during this civil rights movement,
continuing the work to end:
separate and unequal,
less than,
different,
inadequate.

What joyful noise will you make?

Will stranger or foe or both voluntarily give you a standing ovation for the extra-ordinary acts –you've done,
for the movement you've created.

Will you type a sentence, paragraph or chapter in the next social media post?
Will you document hours of advocacy,
a positive service provided,
products invented that are HISTORY and HERSTORY and STORY making?

What motifs will take precedent the 365 days of your life?

Hear meTONIGHT…

We are major.
We are magic.
We are marvelous.
We are more than our molecular parts.
We are miraculous.
In the words of Sister, Doctor, Mother, Maya Angelou,
"Say thank you because God has put a rainbow in the clouds for you."
TONIGHT …We are FAB-U-LOUS TONIGHT!

– Shaashawn "The Voyce" Dial-Snowden

FAB 2014 Award Recipients

Fall Achievement Benefit (FAB) is a key source of funding for The LGBT Center of Central PA, including youth program Common Roads and annual youth conference, Aging with Pride initiative, cultural competency training for schools and social service agencies, an award-winning LGBT History Project, and arts and culture events focusing on educating the community about LGBT people, experiences, and issues. Awards are presented annually individuals and organizations making a difference in the lives of LGBT individuals. About 275 people attended this year's event.

Highmark Blue Shield

Highmark has a long history of working to promote inclusion and is committed to meeting the needs and supporting the efforts of the LGBT community. As an organization, Highmark believes that it is important to advocate for diversity – the diversity of its employees, of its members, and of the communities it serves.

As a corporation, Highmark offers its workforce same-sex and domestic partner benefits. It is committed to this same focus for its customers. For large and small businesses, Highmark has been and remains a pacesetter in administering of same-sex benefit programs. Highmark also provides eligible same-sex spouses, as well as same-sex and opposite sex domestic partners, the choice to enroll in a health care policy together.

As a health plan, Highmark is exploring the possibility of offering transgender benefits to its employees starting in 2015. Highmark administers transgender benefits for its self-insured business clients. With the recent legalization of gay marriage in Pennsylvania, Highmark's commitment to the LGBT community remains unchanged. Highmark continues in its dedication to building an inclusive workplace that helps all of its employees foster an understanding and support of the LGBT community.

Highmark greatly values its relationship with the LGBT community, and is hopeful that by continuing to build on this valued, long-lasting partnership, other organizations will also be encouraged to step forward in support of the LGBT community.

Mary Nancarrow

Mary is a Central PA native and a graduate of Shippensburg University. During the 70's, she was active in Shippensburg Gays United, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Harrisburg Gay Switchboard. In 1975, she joined the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus, which she co-chaired for several years. The Caucus and its successor, the PA Justice Campaign, provided support for LGBT people in non-urban areas, organized demonstrations, held annual conferences and lobbied for equal rights.

In 1982-83, Mary worked with other community leaders and City Council to pass amendments to the Harrisburg Human Relations Ordinance to protect LGBT people from discrimination. Mary was also a delegate to the Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities throughout its existence.

Mary never stopped working for women's rights and became PA NOW president and its PAC chair from 1984-86. She joined the planning group for the 1987 national LGBT March on Washington. Later, Mary volunteered for the first Pride events in Harrisburg, organized teams for the American Cancer Society and the Leukemia Society in the 90's and was on the LGBT Community Center steering committee.

For 11 years, Mary has been board member/fundraiser for the Central PA Womyn's Chorus, a fine lesbian and feminist chorus. There she met her partner, Cynthia Swanson. Mary retired from the PA Human Relations Commission, where she was supervisor and acting regional director. Mary plans to devote time to the Chorus, the History Project and to achieving equality.

Andy Hoover, ACLU of PA

Andy Hoover joined the ACLU of PA in December, 2004, as a community organizer and became legislative director in 2008. As the organization's lead lobbyist, Andy largely deals with civil liberties and civil rights issues at the state capitol. He also works in conjunction with the ACLU's Washington Legislative Office on federal issues.

Andy's work at the ACLU of PA has included efforts to protect the right to vote for all Pennsylvania citizens; to stop the implementation of the federal Real ID Act in the commonwealth; to reform the state and county prison systems through sentencing and parole reform; and to block efforts to rewrite the state constitution to ban same sex marriage.

Andy is a 2008 graduate of the Pennsylvania State University, where he earned a Master of Arts in Community Psychology and Social Change, and a 1995 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor of Arts in communications. He is also ordained clergy in the Order of the Dragonfly at Blue Mountain Lotus Society, a Buddhist community in Harrisburg.

Molly Tack-Hooper

Molly Tack-Hooper is a staff attorney at the ACLU of Pennsylvania where she works on civil liberties impact litigation and advocacy in a broad range of substantive areas, including LGBT rights. Molly was part of the litigation team that won Whitewood v. Wolf, the case that brought marriage equality to Pennsylvania, and Molly has represented LGBT students whose schools refused to allow them to form a Gay-Straight Alliance and a transgender student who was denied the opportunity to run for prom king. Molly obtained her law degree in 2009 from the NYU School of Law and her undergraduate degree in 2002 from Brown University. At NYU Law, Molly received an Arthur Garfield Hays Civil Liberties Fellowship and the John Perry Prize for her dedication to civil liberties. In 2009-2010, she clerked for the Honorable Michael H. Dolinger, U.S. Magistrate Judge in the Southern District of New York. In 2010-2011, she served as a Legal Fellow at the ACLU of Pennsylvania, and from 2011 to 2013, she represented plaintiffs in complex class action litigation as an associate at Berger & Montague in Philadelphia.

Julie Lobur &
Marla Cattermole, Plaintiffs

Having little chance to be herself in her native Iowa, Marla Cattermole joined the army in 1983, hoping to see the world and to connect with other lesbians. She and Julie Lobur were just friends in Basic Training, but fell in love through subsequent letters, phone calls, and visits. When her term of enlistment expired, Marla moved to Harrisburg to live with Julie and Julie's mother. They became a happy family of three as Marla worked her way through school, eventually earning a master's degree in Training and Development from Penn State Harrisburg. Marla is now a Senior Benefits Manager at the Public School Employees' Retirement System and adjunct professor of mathematics at Penn State Harrisburg.

Julie Lobur has lived in Harrisburg most of her life. She enlisted in the army as yet another attempt at escaping a bad relationship. Her military career was quashed through the efforts of her ex; however, things were not as bleak as they seemed: She had Marla's address tucked away safely. When Julie returned home to live with her mother, she was able to resume her studies while working full time at the state. She ultimately earned a master's degree in Computer Science from Penn State Harrisburg. Julie is now a software architect with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and adjunct professor of computer science at Penn State Harrisburg.

From the moment they fell in love, Marla and Julie had wanted to wed. When Iowa struck down its gay marriage ban in 2009, Marla and Julie jumped at the chance to legalize their union in a locale where Marla's family could participate—especially Marla's elderly mother. Then upon returning to Pennsylvania, the couple were "legal strangers" once more. Marla and Julie were eager to right this injustice. In 2013, they joined 23 other plaintiffs in Whitewood versus Wolf, the ACLU's challenge to Pennsylvania's same-sex marriage ban. Through many months of depositions, frenetic document searches, and press interviews, Marla and Julie are honored to have been part of it all. They look forward to the day when this fight is long forgotten and "same-sex marriage" becomes simply "marriage" in everyone's mind.

Chamber on the move

By Bill Krenz

Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

How Social Are We?

Are you aware that the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce has over 1,000 likes on Facebook?

Or that we are consistently tweeting on Twitter?

Have you connected with us on LinkedIn?

As we have continued to expand the chamber's membership base, our online presence and impact have also been trending positive, and growing.

The chamber's website, cpglcc.org, has had over 5,100 sessions so far in 2014, with 3,500 unique visitors, and the average visitor views at least five pages per session.

Our information and posts are literally reaching thousands from the region and beyond.

The average session time is three minutes and 40 seconds, a lot of time in today's online culture of instant gratification.

Our page views have peaked impressively throughout the year. For example, at the end of July, when the chamber received its third national award from the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, the site recorded over 50 sessions per day for two weeks.

We encourage our partners to review and track their site statistics and to make sure they are continuing to look for new ways to generate traffic and increased online presence.

Contact the chamber if additional consulting is needed.

In other news, Gil Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Hospice of Central Pennsylvania, joined the Board of Directors.

Contact: www.cpglcc.org

5 Simple Things Tom Wolf Can Do for Environment

Submitted by Pa Green Groups

In the last four years, Governor Corbett and the Pennsylvania House and Senate have made repeated attacks on environmental protection and sought to maximize the profits of the gas, oil and coal industries at the expense of Pennsylvania's health and safety.

The November 4 election saw the loss of pro-environment seats in both houses of the legislature, predicting further attacks on the environment. Fortunately, Governor-Elect Tom Wolf will have significant power to block those attacks and to move forward on crucial environmental protections, and has promised a cleaner future for Pennsylvania.

Clean Water Action, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, PennEnvironment, PennFuture, and the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter congratulate Governor-Elect Wolf on his victory and look forward to working with his administration to protect Pennsylvania's environment.

To that end, Governor-Elect Wolf can and should:

❶ ***Save State Parks and Forests***

In 2014, Corbett overturned a 2010 executive order that created a moratorium on gas leasing in public lands managed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Wolf should reinstate that order and make it clear that the order applies to both state parks and state forests, and to both surface and subsurface leases. Wolf should do everything in his power to prevent natural gas development in the Clarence Moore lands of the Loyalsock State Forest.

❷ ***Plan for the Future***

Both state and federal laws will require Pennsylvania to adopt new plans to reduce global warming pollution in the coming years. Wolf should produce climate and energy plans based on sound science and focused on rebuilding the wind and solar industries in the state.

❸ ***Let the Department of Environmental Protection Protect the Environment***

Wolf can reverse Corbett's damage to the DEP's commitment and ability to enforce environmental regulations. He can start byimplementing the recommendations of the state Auditor General to ensure both full transparency and strong enforcement of gas drilling rules. Wolf should overhaul the DEP's permitting process for gas drilling and create mandatory enforcement penalties to ensure that public health trumps politics and profits in gas operations. Finally, he should instruct the DEP to ban fracking waste pits, a simple way to significantly reduce the health risks of toxic fracking chemicals.

❹ ***Keep Our Water Safe***

The Delaware River Basin Commission currently prohibits fracking in the Delaware River Watershed, from which 15 million Americans get their drinking water. Wolf should publicly restate his support for the moratorium, seek to restore the Commission's budget, and ensure that the DRBC Commissioner from Pennsylvania works to keep our water clean. Additionally, he should push the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to launch a cumulative impact assessment of fracking on the Susquehanna watershed.

❺ ***Regulate Methane and Clean Up Pennsylvania's Air***

Pennsylvania ranks among the worst states in the nation for air pollution and illnesses like asthma. Currently, Pennsylvania does not directly regulate methane pollution from natural gas operations and lags behind other states in controlling air emissions. Governor-Elect Wolf should work with DEP to directly regulate methane emissions from natural gas operations. Additionally, Pennsylvania should enact a strong "Smog Rule," to limit pollutants like nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds.

To implement these policies, Governor-Elect Wolf needs to build a team of agency leaders committed to environmental protection and independent of the special interests that these bodies oversee – new leadership for the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Public Utilities Commission, the Delaware River Basin Commission, and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission.

Leaders of these agencies should know that climate change is a problem; enthusiastically support renewable energy, clean air, and clean water; and understand that their first duty is to protect the health and safety of Pennsylvania's citizens.

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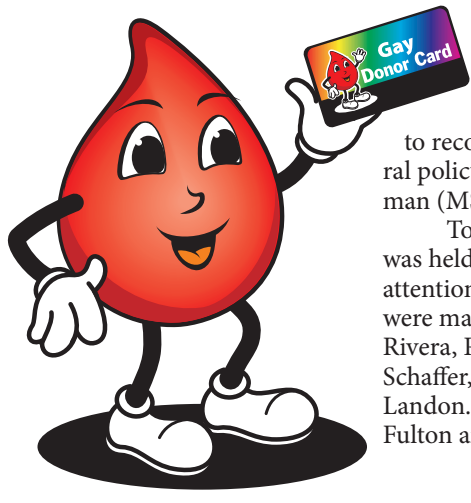
Gay Men Blood Donation Ban



The Blood Products Advisory Committee of the Food and Drug Administration met Dec. 2 to hear scientific data related to reconsideration of the current blood donor deferral policy for men who have had sex with another man (MSM) even one time since 1977.

To bring attention to the ban locally, an event was held at the LGBT Community Center to bring attention to the blood donation ban. Blood donations were made by MCC of the Spirit pastor, Rev. Lori Rivera, Robert Schaffer and his son Alan Kennedy-Schaffer, and Pat Van Horn, shown here with Stuart Landon. Blood donations were also made by Dorothy Fulton and *Central Voice* columnist Trum Simmons.

(Top Left) Rev. Lori Rivera, pastor, MCC of the Spirit
(Top Center) Robert Schaffer and son Alan Kennedy-Schaffer
(Above) Pat Van Horn and Stuart Landon, LGBT Community Center Board President

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